

Farmscape Ecology Program's Native Garden Resource List

So, you want to start a native plant garden!?

Starting a native garden can seem overwhelming, but these resources can help make it feel a little more doable for a beginner. This resource list includes information about plant selection, prepping your garden site, seed saving, benefits of native plants and information on the wildlife that will be attracted to your new native plant garden.

WHY NATIVE PLANTS? / CHOOSING PLANTS FOR YOUR GARDEN

The Audubon Society discusses the importance and benefits of native plants in your garden- especially the relationship between native plants and birds. If you scroll to the bottom of their page, there is a database that provides a list of native species (woody and herbaceous) that are best suited to your zipcode. They also list the bird species that may be attracted to these plants.

<https://www.audubon.org/content/why-native-plants-matter>

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) offers different documents that highlight the benefits of native plants and how to incorporate them into your landscape. This database includes resources on deer resistant native plants, common invasive species, as well as a general guide on how to start a native plant garden/landscape.

https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/Native_Plant_Materials/Native_Gardening/index.shtml

The Finger Lakes Native Plant Society is based in New York state and provides a list of native plants with their sun/soil preferences, and bloom times. They also have a list of nurseries in NYS that sell many different native plants. Under "Plants & Places" there is a "Seedling ID" page that helps to identify native plant seedlings. This resource could come in handy in the spring if your plant labels have faded or you want to know what's growing in areas you've seeded. There are a lot of seedlings included on this list so you might have to sift through it a bit in order to find exactly what you are looking for.

<https://www.flnps.org/plants/list>

The Xerces Society provides information about native plants and what pollinators they attract, as well as how to establish a habitat with beneficial native plants. They have informative lists of native plant species in the Northeast that detail which insects are attracted to each species. While they have information about native landscape installation, it's focused on large scale projects and may not be as helpful for people just beginning their native plant journey. They also occasionally suggest the use of herbicides before installation of native plants, which Farmscape Ecology usually doesn't

recommend. Alternatively, Farmscape Ecology would suggest using a combination of the following to prepare ground for seeding/planting: mowing, tilling, sheet mulching and/or consistent weeding of the unwanted plants to keep the weed pressure down.

<https://xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center/northeast>

The Lady Bird Johnson Native Plant website has tons of resources on native plants. The website has plant lists by region as well as lists of plants that support certain insect groups. There's also a great search engine that that can give you information on specific plants that you're considering for your garden.

<https://www.wildflower.org/plants-main>

Grow Native Massachusetts has great resources for starting out. If you browse their website, they have tons of resources and suggestions for books, lectures, and published articles about native landscapes, plants and the wildlife that is involved. Here is the link for their beginners' page:

<https://grownativemass.org/Know-Your-Landscape/beginners>

ASSESSING YOUR SITE AND PREPARING YOUR GARDEN

Starting a native plant garden may look different depending on whether you're starting a garden from scratch, or adding native plants to already established garden beds. Either way, you'll want to have an understanding of your site in order to know which plants would thrive there.

When starting a garden from scratch, there are many different ways to go about it, and your approach will depend on the size of the garden, the goals you have for it, and the resources and tools you have access to. Here are a handful of resources that have different approaches on the logistics of prepping your site for your garden! Feel free to reach out to us with any questions you might have.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's guide to Native Plant Gardening.

<https://www.wildflower.org/learn/guide-native-plant-gardening>

California Native Plant Society's description of sheet mulching.

<https://www.cnps.org/gardening/sheet-mulching-5875>

USFS Basic Instructions for Native Plant Landscaping Projects.

https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/Native_Plant_Materials/Native_Gardening/instructions.shtml

“Removing Lawn to Make Way for More Habitat.”

<https://content.yardmap.org/learn/removing-lawn-to-make-way-for-more-habitat/>

Lawn to Wildflowers suggests a few, herbicide-free methods of converting lawn to garden bed. They also have resources on pollinators, native flowers, and buying seeds!

<https://www.lawntowildflowers.org/plotmethods>

Though Deep Roots is an organization based in Kansas, their page of resources on starting a garden seems applicable to any region!

<https://deeprroots.org/plant-a-garden/>

PURCHASING SEEDS AND PLANTS

Finger Lakes Native Plant Society resource list for plant nurseries is NYS.

<https://www.flnps.org/links#SourcesforNativePlantsintheFingerLakesRegionofNY>

The Wild Seed Project in Maine is not only a great source for seeds, they have a ton of information on starting seeds, maintaining your garden, the benefits of native plants, and more. Their blog has many relevant posts that will be helpful in your native gardening journey. Two of the blog posts we found helpful were “Small Flowering Trees: A Dozen Native Species for Limited Space” and “Navigating Nurseries: How to Find Native Plants”.

<https://wildseedproject.net>

Ernst Seeds is a good resource to use for purchasing seed mixes and seeds for starting native gardens! They also have a useful search tool that can help you choose the plants that are most suited to your space. They sell tons of different types of seeds for different projects, so don't let that overwhelm you!

<https://www.ernstseed.com/>

SAVING AND STARTING SEEDS

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's guide to collecting wildflower seeds!

<https://www.wildflower.org/learn/collect-store-seeds>

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's guide to preparing seeds for sowing in order to increase germination. This is not always a crucial step in starting seeds, but would likely increase germination if you incorporate these methods.

<https://www.wildflower.org/learn/how-to/how-to-prepare-seeds-for-sowing>

The Wild Seed Project has awesome images along with instructions on autumn and winter seed preparation and planting.

<https://wildseedproject.net/2016/11/ideal-time-for-sowing-native-seeds/>

OTHER RESOURCES

“Leave the Leaves” in the Fall: <https://xerces.org/blog/leave-leaves-to-benefit-wildlife>

“Don’t spring into garden cleanup too soon!” <https://xerces.org/blog/dont-spring-into-garden-cleanup-too-soon>