

Shady/Dry



Bring Home the Natives

More than just pretty plants

Why should I care about native plants?

Native plants create beautiful landscapes that provide native wildlife with the best habitat and food they need to survive. Native plants also help to protect watersheds and maintain the unique natural heritage of an area.

In Pennsylvania, our native plants lend a sense of place that is recognized and enjoyed by citizens and visitors from all over the world. If our native plants continue to be replaced with species from other places, Pennsylvania will lose the natural beauty and resources that define the state.

Not only do native plants provide benefits to the environment as a whole, they also provide value to you and your backyard. Because Pennsylvania's native plants are meant to grow here, they thrive with less maintenance in the right conditions, thereby reducing the need to water and fertilize them. They also serve as pollinators and attract wildlife.

What is a native plant?

A **native plant** is one that occurred within the state before settlement by Europeans. Native plants include ferns and clubmosses; grasses, sedges, rushes, and their kin; flowering perennials; annuals, which only live one year; biennials, which have a two-year life cycle; and, of course, the woody trees, shrubs, and vines that covered "Penn's Woods" when the first settlers arrived. More than 2,100 native plant species make up the botanical diversity of Pennsylvania.

A "growing" problem

While new plants are coming into Pennsylvania, native plants are being lost to habitat destruction, invasive plants, and introduced pests and diseases. By 2000, five percent of Pennsylvania's native plant species had been eliminated and another 25 percent were in danger of becoming extinct. The good news is that action can be taken to protect and enhance the remaining diversity of these beautiful and often useful plant species.

An **introduced or non-native plant** is one that has been brought into the state and become established. At the turn of the 21st century, about 1,300 species of non-native plants existed in Pennsylvania. That is 37 percent of Pennsylvania's total plant flora (about 3,400 species), and more introduced plants are identified every year.

An **invasive plant** is a species that has become a weed pest—one that grows aggressively, spreads, and displaces other plants. Although some native plants are aggressive on disturbed areas, most invasive plants are introduced from other regions, leaving behind the pests, diseases, predators, and other natural controls that usually keep them in check.

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for a larger list of native plants, native plant nurseries, garden templates and more!

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Cooperating Partners:



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Backyard Best Bets



Sugar maple

This important timber tree, famous for its sweet sap, is an excellent ornamental for large, open areas. Come autumn, the leaves turn brilliant shades of yellow, orange, or red.



Witch-hazel

Known for the medicinal extract distilled from its bark, this deciduous shrub is used as a food source by the larvae of certain moths and butterflies. Its yellow flowers bloom in the fall—a rarity among trees.



Arrow-wood

Conspicuous white flowers give way to abundant dark fruit making this shrub highly-valued by wildlife. Its straight stems and vase-shape contribute structure to a yard in winter.



Black cohosh

Bearing tall, tapering racemes of white, mid-summer flowers on wiry black-purple stems, this perennial is a lovely background plant. The drying seed heads stay on the plant for many weeks, adding interest to the garden.

How can I help?

- Learn more about native plants
- Landscape with native plants
- Buy nursery-propagated native plants
- Practice responsible landscaping techniques
- Protect your property against invasive plants
- Do not remove native plants from the wild
- Protect native plant communities and minimize habitat destruction

Tips for reducing invasive plant introductions and growth

- Avoid using known invasive plants
- Minimize landscape disturbance
- Protect healthy native plant communities
- Use organic fertilizers wisely
- Create a land management plan for maintenance over time
- Scout for invasive plants regularly
- Remove invasive plants when they are present in low numbers or when they are confined to a small area before they become a problem
- Dispose of removed invasive plants wisely
- Replace invasive plants with native or non-invasive species
- Clean equipment before using it elsewhere to minimize the spread of invasives from one area to another
- Ask for fill materials free of invasive plants

DCNR's Backyard Best Bets were chosen based on their hardiness potential in any soil condition, availability in the nursery trade, wildlife and habitat benefit, and viability in the overall ecosystem.

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Key for Symbols



Attracts Birds



Nectar Plant



Deer Resistant



Drought Resistant



Edible



Colorful Fall Leaves



Attracts Wildlife



Evergreen



Fragrant




Durable Plants













Ground Cover



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Trees	Size	Bloom period	Bloom/Fruit											
Red maple <i>Acer rubrum</i>	40-100'	Mar-Apr	red flowers	■								■		
Sugar maple <i>Acer saccharum</i>	60-100'	Apr-May	yellow flowers	■					■			■	■	
Downy serviceberry <i>Amelanchier arborea</i>	20-30'	Mar-May	white flowers	■					■			■		
Allegheny serviceberry <i>Amelanchier laevis</i>	25'	Mar-May	white flowers		■									
Mockernut hickory <i>Carya alba (tomentosa)</i>	75-100'		reddish brown nut	■								■		
Common hackberry <i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	30-70'	Apr-May	purple brown fruit		■	■								
Redbud <i>Cercis canadensis</i>	20-35'	Apr-May	pinkish flowers		■				■					
Tulip poplar <i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	75-100'	May-Jun	green flowers						■					
Hop hornbeam <i>Ostrya virginiana</i>	35-50'		hop-like flowers & fruit									■		
Wild plum <i>Prunus americana</i>	15-30'	Apr-May	white flowers						■			■		
Chestnut oak <i>Quercus prinus (montana)</i>	50-75'		acorn fruit	■								■		
Shrubs	Size	Bloom period	Bloom/Fruit											
New Jersey tea <i>Ceanothus americanus</i>	< 3'	May-Sep	creamy white flowers				■							
American hazelnut <i>Corylus americana</i>	10-15'		brown or red catkins						■					
Beaked hazelnut <i>Corylus cornuta</i>	6-12'											■		
Witch-hazel <i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>	8-20'	Sep-Nov	golden flowers									■	■	■
Mountain laurel <i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	12-20'	May-Jul	white to pink flowers							■				
Rosebay <i>Rhododendron maximum</i>	10-30'	Jun-Jul	rose pink flowers							■				
Pinxter-flower <i>Rhododendron periclymenoides</i>	6-12'	Apr-May	pink to white flowers									■		
Red elderberry <i>Sambucus racemosa</i>	4-10'	May	creamy white flowers							■	■	■		
Lowbush blueberry <i>Vaccinium angustifolium</i>	1-2'	May-Jun	blue to black berry	■					■			■		
Maple-leaved viburnum <i>Viburnum acerifolium</i>	4-6'	May-Jun	white flowers	■					■					
Arrow-wood <i>Viburnum recognitum</i>	3-15'	May-Jun	white flowers									■	■	
Blackhaw <i>Viburnum prunifolium</i>	8-15'	Apr-May	bluish-black berry						■					
Ferns	Size	Bloom period	Bloom/Fruit											
Evergreen shield fern <i>Dryopteris marginalis marginalis</i>	1-3'									■				

Perennials	Size	Bloom period	Bloom/Fruit											Backyard Best Bet	Ground Cover
Wild columbine <i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>	1-3'	Apr-Jun	red-yellow flowers		■			■					■		
Wild ginger <i>Asarum canadense</i>	< 1'	Apr-May	maroon flowers						■	■					■
White wood aster <i>Eurybia (Aster) divaricatus</i>	1-3'	Jul-Oct	white flowers		■			■				■			
Blue cohosh <i>Caulophyllum thalictroides</i>	1-2.5'	Apr-Jun	green-yellow flowers												
Black cohosh <i>Actea racemosa</i>	3-8'	Jun-Sep	white flowers					■					■		
White snakeroot <i>Ageratina altissima (Eupatorium rugosum)</i>	2-3'	Jul-Oct	white flowers					■							
Wild geranium <i>Geranium maculatum</i>	1-2'	Apr-Jul	lavender-pink flowers					■							
Alumroot <i>Heuchera americana</i>	1-2'	May-Aug	greenish flowers				■			■					
Virginia bluebells <i>Mertensia virginica</i>	1-2.5'	Mar-Jun	pink-blue flowers					■							
Partridge-berry <i>Mitchella repens</i>	0.5"	May-Jul	white flowers						■	■		■			■
Mayapple <i>Podophyllum peltatum</i>	1-2'	May	white flowers									■			
Bloodroot <i>Sanguinaria canadensis</i>	< 1'	Mar-May	snow white flowers												
Stonecrop <i>Sedum ternatum</i>	< 1'	Apr-Jun	greenish-white flowers												■
False Solomon's seal <i>Smilacina racemosa</i>	1-2'	May-Jul	white flowers					■							
White goldenrod <i>Solidago bicolor</i>	1-2'	Aug-Oct	creamy white flowers					■							
Zigzag goldenrod <i>Solidago flexicaulis</i>	1-4'	Aug-Nov	yellow flowers					■							
Foamflower <i>Tiarella cordifolia</i>	< 1'	Apr-Jul	white flowers												■

Ground Cover

Native ground covers



Stonecrop

Planting native ground covers is a perfect solution for areas of your yard that have erosion issues. Erosion is not only bad for water quality, it also causes the loss of valuable topsoil that develops into unsightly bald patches in your yard. Find ground covers that are right for your yard's site conditions. They will add visual interest to what was once a landscaping challenge and environmental problem.

