

A BRIEF GUIDE TO SELECTING, PLANTING, & CARING FOR NATIVE PLANTS

Congrats on choosing native! Native plants are adapted to the local climate and soil conditions and evolved alongside native pollinators, which makes them a smart choice. Here's how to start:

TIP #1 Remove & control weeds!

Weeds can easily choke out seedlings. Eliminating weeds before planting is easiest because you can till or apply herbicide over the entire area. Once native plants are installed, control weeds by hand pulling small areas or using herbicides as needed. Make sure the herbicide is selective (i.e. kills specific plant types) and/or be very careful not to apply to your desirable plants and always follow label directions.

TIP #2 Hold up on the fertilizer.

Since native plants are adapted to the local environment, they generally do not need fertilizer and have robust root systems to draw in nutrients. Obtain a soil test if you suspect your site may be lacking nutrients.

- <https://homesoiltest.msu.edu/get-started>
- <https://www.canr.msu.edu/spnl/>

TIP #3 Check out more resources.

This is by no means a comprehensive guide. Check out these websites for more info:

- www.canr.msu.edu/nativeplants/plant_facts/local_info
- <https://annarbor.wildones.org>
- www.wildtypeplants.com
- www.prairiemoon.com
- nativeplant.com/plants/search/input
- www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/Native_Plant_Materials

Ask your local government about regulations around prescribed burns for prairies.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1. Investigate site conditions over time.

Do you have sand, loam or clay soil? How much sun does the site receive throughout the day and season? How does the soil moisture level change? Take notes!

2. Choose your native plants accordingly.

Use our native plant chart (or one from a native plant nursery) to choose your plants based on soil type, light levels, moisture requirements, and your intended purpose. Remember, right plant + right place = success!

3. Consider the bigger picture – layout and goals.

What is your goal (e.g. pollinators, aesthetics, privacy)? Do you have constraints (height, spread, time, equipment)? Draft a layout of the placement and number of each plant to be installed. Consider planting multiples of the same species together since they have the same requirements.

4. Prepare the site.

Prep your area by killing or removing existing vegetation (typically by tilling or applying herbicides), so native plants can focus energy on establishing. If you decide to use herbicide, read the label carefully and follow all directions.

5. Plant!

Refer to the layout you drafted in Step 3. Spacing will vary depending on species and your goal, but in general, dig holes deep enough to accommodate roots and space plants based on mature sizes. Tamp down soil and water-in well.

6. Monitor the area.

Remove weeds and water plants throughout the first growing season, especially during dry spells to encourage root growth. Remove diseased vegetation as soon as possible.

7. Prepare for next season.

If no pests or diseases occurred, consider waiting to remove dead vegetation until March or early-April (while plants are dormant and not actively growing) to provide native pollinators and other insects homes for the winter.