

# Get RainReady with NATIVE PLANTS



THE PEGGY NOTEBAERT  
NATURE MUSEUM  
The Museum of the Chicago Academy of Sciences



In *RainReady*<sup>SM</sup> communities, better water management means that homes, schools, and businesses are prepared for rain—whether too much or too little. RainReady programs keep residences secure and dry, services running, and rivers and lakes clean.



1. Black-eyed Susan. Photo credit: smile4, Flickr Creative Commons.
2. Purple Cone Flower. Photo credit: DrPhotoMoto, Flickr Creative Commons.
3. Jacob's Ladder. Photo credit: dog of the forest, Flickr Creative Commons.
4. Cardinal Flower. Photo credit: jjjj56cp, Flickr Creative Commons.
5. Golden Alexander. Photo credit: pchgorman, Flickr Creative Commons.

## WHY PLANT NATIVE PLANTS AT HOME?

- Native prairie, woodland and wetland plants have evolved to thrive in our natural conditions and, after the first season or two of establishment in your yard, typically require less maintenance than a conventional lawn or garden.
- Native plants do not require chemical fertilizer or pesticides and can save you money in the long-term, while helping the environment.
- Native plants can be quite beautiful and lend your backyard a sense of place rooted in natural history, while providing food and shelter for birds and beneficial insects (e.g. dragonflies that eat mosquitoes).
- Native and other deep-rooted plants help direct rainwater into the soil and if planted in a rain garden in conjunction with a disconnected downspout, native plants are especially effective for managing stormwater.

## DID YOU KNOW?

LAWN IRRIGATION CAN ACCOUNT FOR AS MUCH AS 30% OF A TYPICAL RESIDENT'S WATER USE.

NATIVE PLANTS REQUIRE LESS IRRIGATION AND ACTUALLY HELP REDUCE STORMWATER RUNOFF.

## WE CAN HELP!

If you or your community are interested in getting RainReady, CNT staff members are available for presentations and for case-by-case technical assistance. Our presentations explain the benefits of rain readiness and outline their key elements, including needs assessments, financing, and supportive policies.

For more information visit [rainready.org](http://rainready.org) or contact [info@rainready.org](mailto:info@rainready.org).






































A monarch butterfly rests on a milkweed flower.

## LOCAL EXAMPLES OF NATIVE PLANT LANDSCAPING

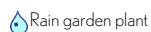
- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum Prairie - 2430 N Cannon Drive
- McCormick Center Butterfly Garden - 2301 S Lake Shore Drive
- Northerly Island - 1400 S Lynn White Drive
- North Park Village Nature Center - 5801 N Pulaski Road
- The Lurie Garden at Millennium Park - 201 E Randolph Street
- Lincoln Park Zoo - 2001 N Clark Street

## RECOMMENDED NATIVE PLANTS FOR CHICAGO

With these things in mind, ask your local garden center experts which kinds of plants will work best for you. Here are a few common situations and the plants that will thrive under those conditions:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Type	Notes	Soil Requirements	
Meadowsweet	<i>Spiraea alba</i>	Shrub	White flower clusters bloom early in summer	Wet to moist and well-drained	 
Northern Sea Oats	<i>Chasmanthium latifolium</i>	Grass	Beautiful seed heads for cut and dried arrangements	Most and well-drained to dry	   
Switch Grass	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	Grass	Lacy sprays, grass turns yellow in falls	Wet to moist and well-drained	  
Little Bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	Grass	Ornamental grass forms very dense mounds	Most and well-drained to dry	  
Nodding Wild Onion	<i>Allium cernuum</i>	Flower	Pink flower clusters no to ground, bulbs can, be used raw boiled, pickled or as seasoning	Wet to moist and well-drained	   
Butterfly Milkweed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Flower	Bright orange flowers are loved by butterflies	Moist and well-drained to dry	   
New England Aster	<i>Aster novae-anglia</i>	Flower	Showy, bright purple or white flowers have orange centers	Wet to moist and well-drained	   
Pale Purple Coneflower	<i>Echinacea pallida</i>	Flower	Pale petals droop from large cone-shaped center	Moist and well-drained to dry	  
Purple Coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	Flower	Popular native, long-lasting lavender flowers	Wet to moist and well-drained	  
Rattlesnake Master	<i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>	Flower	Tough stems support balls of white flowers	Wet to moist and well-drained	   
Blue Flag Iris	<i>Iris virginica shreveyi</i>	Flower	Fragrant blue-violet flowers	Wet to moist and well-drained	  
Blazingstar	<i>Liatris spp.</i>	Flower	Striking, long purple flower heads	Tolerant of most soils	   
Virginia Blue Bells	<i>Mertensia virginica</i>	Flower	Lovely blue flowers, great for under trees	Moist and well-drained	 
Wild Bergamot	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Flower	Flowers of lavender or pink pompoms, plant parts used for tea	Tolerant of most soils	   
Purple Prairie Clover	<i>Petalostemum purpureum</i>	Flower	Beautiful in bouquets, flowers attract butterflies and bees	Moist and well-drained to dry	  
Mayapple	<i>Podophyllum peltatum</i>	Flower	Spring bloom of apple-blossom-like flower	Moist and well-drained	 

Symbol Key:



Beneficial to birds + butterflies



Full sun



Partial sun



Full shade

## CONVENTIONAL LANDSCAPING

- Generates stormwater runoff and puts stress on our sewers while wasting treated water.
- Can be expensive to maintain and requires new planting annually.
- Sometimes includes exotic and invasive species.
- Can require the use of fertilizers and pesticides.
- Yearly planting, fertilizing and maintenance generates excess waste.
- Does not impact home energy efficiency.
- Often promotes materials shipped from far away at great cost.

## SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING

- Minimizes stormwater runoff and utilizes valuable rainwater for irrigation.
- Minimizes maintenance costs by utilizing perennials and long-term landscape planning.
- Designed with native species that have adapted to survive in our climate and do not require fertilizers or pesticides.
- Native plants maintain four-season appeal by attracting and sustaining our native birds and other wildlife year-round.
- Low-maintenance means low-waste. The waste generated is composted and reused throughout the landscape.
- Promotes home energy efficiency. Trees provide shade in summer and block winds in winter.
- Supports our local businesses by employing a greater number of small facilities, hand labor and ongoing maintenance.

## WHAT TO DO BEFORE YOU PLANT

There are many varieties of native plants available through Chicago's local garden centers and nurseries. Much like planning any other type of landscaping, you should take stock of your backyard resources before deciding which plants to buy:

- ✓ How much sun do you get in your backyard?
- ✓ What is the soil like?
- ✓ Are there any low areas that tend to collect water during rains?
- ✓ How much space is available for adding new plants?
- ✓ Can you remove some of your turf grass to make more room?



Wild Bergamot

## HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR NATIVE PLANTS

Every species and variety of native plant has a different set of needs, so be sure to speak with the experts at your local garden center when you make your purchase. In general, deep-rooted perennials will need some time to establish themselves. You should be ready to provide extra care through watering and weeding during the first season or two, depending on the variety you have selected.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR SITE

### LAYOUT

Take a good look at your site. Note the placement of existing plants and trees, paved areas, buildings and power lines. Take a few days to monitor which areas get full or partial sunlight and take note of low spots that tend to collect water during rain storms.

### SOIL

Determine your soil type before you purchase new plants or trees and check with your local garden center for species adapted to your soil type. If you are planning to grow vegetables, build a raised bed or have your soil tested to ensure it is safe for growing vegetables.

### SUN

Before you buy new plants or trees, be sure to note the sunny and shady areas of your yard. Each species has its own sunlight requirement and should be planted accordingly. Look for opportunities to use trees for shading a seating area or the windows of your home.

## SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING TIPS

- Use locally-sourced and recycled materials where possible.
- Avoid impermeable surfaces. Utilize permeable materials where possible.
- Use homemade compost instead of store-bought fertilizers.
- Practice Integrated Pest Management instead of applying pesticides.
- If you choose to keep a lawn, utilize natural lawncare practices.
- To maximize energy savings, strategically plant trees to serve as wind-blocks in the winter and shade your home in the summer.
- See [www.chicagohomecomposting.org](http://www.chicagohomecomposting.org) and [www.landscapeforlife.org](http://www.landscapeforlife.org) for more information.

ARE YOU RAINREADY? IS YOUR COMMUNITY RAINREADY?

LEARN MORE AT [WWW.RAINREADY.ORG](http://WWW.RAINREADY.ORG)

