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A Landscape worth Considering - Landscaping with Native Plants

brochure by Cheryl Haberman

Whether you are in the process of landscaping a new home site or interested in renovating an existing yard, consider native plantings. Native landscaping is the practice of cultivating plants indigenous to your area with the goal of harmonizing the landscape with nature. Before European settlement, around 150 years ago, pristine prairies, woodlands and savannas covered our landscape.



Nearly all has been altered or replaced by farming, urbanization, and the interruption of natural processes such as fire. The return of native plants to the urban, suburban or rural landscape brings back our natural heritage, enriches the human spirit, and restores the ecology of our local environment.

Why consider native landscaping?

- Butterflies and songbirds benefit from the diversity of food, cover, and space in a natural planting, and add to the pleasure your home provides.
- Native landscaping saves precious time and expense and lessens our dependence on chemical and non-renewable resources. It is unnecessary to resort to artificial methods of maintenance such as adding fertilizers and pesticides, mowing and irrigating.
- Native plants are well adapted and can survive bitter, cold winters and hot, dry summers.
- Native landscaping soaks up rainfall and consequently reduces runoff of nutrients and chemicals into our lakes.
- A native landscape is dynamic. Interesting flowers, shapes, colors, and textures vary from week to week, season to season, year to year. The splendid diversity favorably contrasts to a traditional landscape.
- Discovering the wonders of nature is an exciting reward.

Ecological and environmental considerations:

- In the United States, lawns occupy more land than any single crop, including wheat, corn or tobacco.
- Ten times more chemical pesticides are applied to lawns than farm crops.
- Of the 34 major lawn care pesticides, 32 have not been tested for their long-term effects on humans and the environment.
- A gasoline-powered mower spews out as much smog-forming gases as 30 average cars in one hour.

A well planned landscape that includes native plants to accent each season is a valuable asset to your property. Your site characteristics will determine the type of plantings for successful results.

You can employ different degrees of native plantings on your property.

- Incorporate native trees and shrubs into a traditional landscape.
 - Replace a high maintenance perennial garden with a butterfly or prairie garden.
 - Design small islands of plant communities.
 - Naturalize an entire yard, include a border, (lawn, shrub, fence), between your yard and your neighbor's property.
 - Cooperate with your neighbors to integrate native landscapes or to create a natural corridor through your yards.
- Whatever option you choose, a native landscape will benefit our land, restore a home for wildlife, and provide a satisfying experience for all.

To view this brochure in its original format go to:

Dane County Environmental Council: A Landscape worth Considering—Landscaping with Native Plants *by Cheryl Haberman*

http://vilaslandandwater.org/land_resources_pages/land_resources_native_plants/landscaping_w_native_plants/landscape_worth_considering.pdf

Here is a nice concise overview with information on site preparation and plant nurseries.

US EPA: Landscaping with Native Plants

<http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/navland.html>

For a list of plants suitable for use in northern Michigan.

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council: Northern Michigan's Native Plants

http://www.watershedcouncil.org/learn/landscaping-with-native-plants/files/NativePlants_Brochure.pdf

An entire website devoted to native plants.

Wild Ones – Native Plants, Natural Landscapes

<http://for-wild.org/>

MSUE Bulletin: Attracting Beneficial Insects With Native Flowering Plants

<http://nativeplants.msu.edu/pdf/E2973.pdf>

Purdue University: Landscaping Over Septic Systems with Native Plants

<http://www.washtenawcd.org/downloads/landscapeoversepticssystem.pdf>