A close-up photograph of several pink coneflowers (Echinacea) in a garden. The flowers have bright pink petals and prominent orange-brown centers. Some flowers are in sharp focus, while others are blurred in the background. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title text.

Plant This, Not That:

A Guide to Native Alternatives in the Yard

This publication produced by Lauren Healey for:










Special thanks to: Nancy Pau, Carol Decker, Jenn Houle, Beth Clary and Sue Stasiuk for formatting help and awesome plant knowledge

About West Newbury Wild & Native

West Newbury Wild and Native is dedicated to sharing information and resources for residents of West Newbury and surrounding communities to integrate native plants into their gardening, support pollinators and work to eradicate invasive plants in our yards and Town-owned lands.

Website: www.wnwildnative.org

Facebook: West Newbury Wild and Native

Icon Guide	
Sun	
	Full Sun: 6+ hours sun/day
	Part-Shade: 3-6 hours of sun/day
	Full Shade: < 3 hours sun/day
Water (W)	
	Low
	Medium
	High
Other	
Ht	Height
O	Other
	Deer resistant



WHY NATIVES?

Support Wildlife & Pollinators

- Provide nectar and pollen, edible fruit and seeds, nesting habitat, and more
- Support the whole food web. Pollinators feed birds and contribute to healthy ecosystems

Easier Yard

- Adapted to local conditions making them low maintenance
- More drought tolerant
- Money and time saving; many natives are prolific
- Beautiful!

Protect the Watershed

- Require no fertilizer or herbicides, protecting water supplies
- Require less water
- Improve water quality by filtering pollutants

Build and Sequester Carbon

- Less mowing means less polluting fuel used
- Diverse, dense plantings have deep roots that store carbon and build healthier soil



In one season, natives provide more benefits than a lawn in its lifetime



Native yards can create a wildlife corridor from Florida to Maine



Non-Natives

- Minimal value for pollinators and wildlife, despite blooms
- Over-used and less exciting
- Some are invasive, escaping gardens & displacing natives in the wild. This creates large areas of unhelpful plants
- Controlled non-natives in your garden, may become invasive in the next 10-20 years as the climate changes



**Nature's best hope
is your yard!**

ORNAMENTAL TREES



PLANT THESE



Cornus alternifolia

Pagoda Dogwood

Interesting in all 4 seasons

Ht: 15-25 ft Sun:  W: 



Magnolia virginiana

Sweet Bay Magnolia

Long blooming semi-evergreen

Ht: 15-20 ft Sun:  W:   O: 



Amelanchier arborea

Serviceberry

Edible fruit that birds love

Ht: 15-40 ft Sun:   W:  O: 



Cercis canadensis

Eastern Redbud

Heart-shaped leaves, beautiful blooms

Ht: 15-30 ft Sun:    W:  O: 

NOT THESE



Chinese Magnolia

Short bloom time

Ht: 15-20 ft Sun:   W:  O: 









Flowering Cherry

Despite blooms, provides minimal food

Ht: 15-20 ft Sun:  W: 

LARGE TREES

	PLANT THESE		NOT THESE
E V E R G R E E N	<div><p><i>Thuja occidentalis</i></p><p>Eastern Arborvitae/White Cedar</p><p>“Elegantissima” is deer resitant</p><p>Ht: 30-60 ft Sun: ☀️☀️ W: 💧💧</p></div>	<div><p><i>Juniperus virginiana</i></p><p>Eastern Red Cedar</p><p>Top 10 for birds. Resistant to dry, heat</p><p>Ht: 30-35 ft Sun: ☀️☀️ W: 💧 O: 🚫</p></div>	<div><p>Blue Spruce</p><p>Prone to disease</p><p>Ht:30-60 ft Sun: ☀️☀️ W: 💧💧 O: 🚫</p></div>
	<div><p><i>Prunus serotina</i></p><p>Black Cherry</p><p>Top 10 for pollinators and birds</p><p>Ht: 50-80 ft Sun: ☀️☀️ W: 💧💧</p></div>	<div><p><i>Quercus alba</i></p><p>White Oak</p><p>Top 10 for pollinators and birds</p><p>Ht: 50-80 f Sun: ☀️☀️ W: 💧💧</p></div>	<div><p>Norway Maple</p><p>Invasive! A “weed tree”</p><p>Ht: 40-90 ft Sun: ☀️☀️ W: 💧💧</p></div>
D E C I D U O U S			

GROUNDCOVER

PLANT THESE

NOT THESE

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Fragaria virginiana

Wild Strawberry

Top 10 for pollinators! Semi-evergreen

Ht: 3-6 in Sun: ☀️ ⚡️ ☼ W: 🟦 O: 🚫



Potentilla canadensis

Dwarf Cinquefoil

Fast spreader, low maintenance

Ht: 3-6 in Sun: ☀️ ⚡️ W: 🟦 O: 🚫



Bugleweed

Invasive!

Ht: 4-8 in Sun: ☀️ ⚡️ W: 🟦🟦 O: 🚫

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Phlox divaricata

Blue Phlox

Evergreen with fragrant flowers.

Ht: 4-6 in Sun: ⚡️ ☼ W: 🟦🟦 O: 🚫



Tiarella cordifolia

Running Foam Flower

Semi-evergreen maple-like leaves

Ht: 50-80 ft Sun: ⚡️ ☼ W: 🟦🟦 O: 🚫



Periwinkle

Invasive!

Ht: 3-6 in Sun: ⚡️ ☼ W: 🟦🟦 O: 🚫

FOUNDATION PLANTINGS

PLANT THESE

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Taxus canadensis

American Yew

Also good for mass planting on slopes

Ht: 3-5 ft Sun: ★ W: ●●



Ilex glabra

Inkberry Holly

Great alternative to boxwood

Ht: 5-10 ft Sun: ★★ W: ●● O: ☞

NOT THESE



Japanese Yew

Berries are toxic.

Ht: varies Sun: ★★ W: ●● O: ☞

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Vaccinium corymbosum

Highbush Blueberry

Top 10 for pollinators & birds. Fall foliage

Ht: 3-8 ft Sun: ★★ W: ●● O: ☞



Viburnum dentatum

Arrowwood Viburnum

Adaptable with hydrangea-like blooms

Ht: 6-10 ft Sun: ★★ W: Any O: ☞



Japanese Barberry

Invasive and tick breeding ground!

Ht: 3-6 ft. Sun: ★★ W: ● O: ☞

FENCELINE SHRUBS

PLANT THESE



Cornus racemosa

Gray Dogwood

Very adaptable from dry to wet

Ht: 10-15 ft Sun: ☀️ ⚡️ W: All O: 🚫



Prunus maritima

Beach plum

Local favorite for making jam!

Ht: 5-10 ft Sun: ☀️ W: 🌊 O: 🚫



Rubus odoratus

Flowering Raspberry

Very few pests, top 10 for birds

Ht: 3-5 ft Sun: ☀️ ⚡️ ⚡️ W: 🌊 O: 🚫



Physocarpus opulifolius

Ninebark

Attractive in all seasons. Can be shaped

Ht: 5-10 ft Sun: ☀️ ⚡️ W: All O: 🚫

NOT THESE



Rose of Sharon

Invasive! Aggressively self-seeds

Ht: 8-12 ft Sun: ☀️ W: 🌊 O: 🚫



Forsythia

Only attractive in the spring

Ht: 8-10 ft Sun: ☀️ ⚡️ W: 🌊 O: 🚫

LAWN

PLANT THESE



Wildflower Mix

Replace lawn with short natives like wild bergamont, lanceleaf coreopsis, & black-eyed susan



Overseed

Overseed lawn with low-growing natives like self-heal, native clover & yarrow



Lawn Alternative Mix

Fescue (red sheep, hard), clover (native, mini), wild strawberry, & buffalo grass. For sun, shade and all soil types. Minimal mowing (1-4x/yr), requires no fertilizer



Evergreen Groundcover

Like bearberry (pictured), horizontal juniper, and wintergreen

NOT THESE




Lawn

High maintenance. Uses lots of water and fuel

Tips

- Keep only the lawn you need
- Increase mower height; stop watering, fertilizing and herbicides

Best	Native mixed meadow, shrubs and trees
	Lawn oversown with natives
	Monoculture alternative (clover)
	Traditional lawn
Worst	

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

PLANT THESE

NOT THESE

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Little Bluestem

Beautiful blue-green foliage!

Ht: 2-4 ft Sun: ☀️☀️ W: 🟦 O: 🚫



Prairie Dropseed

Drought tolerant with graceful tufts

Ht: 2-3 ft Sun: ☀️ W: 🟦 O: 🚫



Fountain Grass

Grown for its small height

Ht: 1-4 ft Sun: ☀️ W: 🟦🟦 O: 🚫

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Big Bluestem

Interesting seed heads and tall plumes

Ht: 4-8 ft Sun: ☀️ W: 🟦🟦 O: 🚫



Switchgrass

Favorite of birds.

Ht: 3-6 ft Sun: ☀️ W: 🟦🟦 O: 🚫



Maiden Grass

Grown for its height and plumes

Ht: 4-8 ft Sun: ☀️ W: 🟦🟦 O: 🚫

POLLINATOR FEAST

PLANT THESE



Aster and Goldenrod

Top 10 for pollinators. Great fall display

Ht: 3-6 ft Sun: ☀️ W: 💧 O: 🚫



Sweet Pepperbush

Very few pests. Nice clumps.

Ht: 5-10 ft Sun: ☀️🌞 W: 💧💧💧 O: 🚫



Bee Balm

15+ native species including Wild Bergamot, Spotted, Scarlet (pictured, & Lemon

Ht: 2-4 ft Sun: ☀️ W: 💧💧 O: 🚫



Spicebush

Trees and shrubs are just as important for wildlife

Ht: 6-12 ft Sun: 🌞🌙 W: 💧💧 O: 🚫

NOT THIS



Butterfly Bush

Invasive & less valuable than natives
































Ht: 5-10 ft Sun: ☀️🌞 W: 💧💧 O: 🚫



Pennsylvania Sedge

Caterpillars need food too! One of the top 10 plants for pollinators is a sedge

Ht: 3-4 ft Sun: 🌞🌙 W: 💧 O: 🚫

PERENNIALS				
	PLANT THESE		NOT THESE	
S U N	 <i>Asclepias spp</i> Milkweed Many choices including butterflyweed (pictured), common, swamp, and showy Ht: 1-4 ft Sun:  W:  O: 	 <i>Echinacea purpurea</i> Purple Coneflower Watch for cultivars! Showy, easy to grow, and “tough as nails” Ht: 2-4 ft Sun:   W:   O: 	 Daylily Can be invasive. Overused. Short blooming period limits value Ht: 3-6 ft Sun:  W:  	
	 <i>Polygonatum biflorum</i> Solomon's Seal Fun zig-zag stalks and hanging flowers Ht: 1-3 ft Sun:   W:   O: 	 <i>Asarum canadense</i> Wild ginger Deer resistant & interesting texture Ht: 3-6 ft Sun:   W:   O: 	 Hosta Tasty treat for deer Ht: 3-6 ft Sun:   W:  	
S H A D E				

TOP TEN LISTS

Top Plants for Pollinators

- Pennsylvania Sedge
- Aster
- Joe-Pye Weed
- Wild Strawberry
- Spicebush
- Cardinal Flower
- Cherry
- Oak
- Goldenrod
- Highbush Blueberry

Top Plants for Sunny Gardens

- Bearberry
- Milkweed
- Hairy Beardtongue
- Bluets
- Wild Bergamot
- Black-eyed Susan
- Little Bluestem
- Three-toothed cinquefoil
- Prairie dropseed
- Bird's foot violet

Dramatic Fall Foliage

- Black Chokeberry
- American Hazelnut
- Flowering Spurge
- Sweetgum
- Blackgum
- Sourwood
- Fragrant Sumac
- Sassafras
- Blueberry
- Witherod

Top Plants for Songbirds

- American Spikenard
- Woodland Sunflower
- Eastern Red Cedar
- Scarlet Beebalm
- Black Cherry
- White Oak
- Flowering Raspberry
- Red-twig Dogwood
- Highbush Blueberry
- Viburnum

Top Plants for Shady Gardens

- Black Cohosh
- Maidenhair fern
- Twinleaf
- Mountain Laurel
- Solomon's plume
- Virginia bluebells
- Wild Blue Phlox
- Great Rosebay
- Rue Anemone
- Foamflower

Attractive in Winter

- Striped Maple
- Yellow Birch
- Shagbitch Hickory
- Wintergreen
- American Holly
- Winterberry Holly
- Fiddlehead Fern
- Christmas Fern
- Three-toothed Cinquefoil
- Red-twig dogwood

RESOURCES



Note About Cultivars

Many natives are also sold as “native cultivars” where a trait like the size, color, or flower shape is changed. If your goal is maximizing pollinators be cautious of these. Changing size has little impact but changing color or flower shape can confuse pollinators. Many only feed on one flower type and won’t go to a red flower when they are wired to look for blue flowers. That being said, if a few non-natives (that aren’t invasive!) keep you excited about your garden, add a couple.

Tips for Low Maintenance Gardens

- Use groundcovers as a living mulch
- Space plants close together
- Use the right plant for the right location
- Use natural mulches like cardboard covered in leaves, wood chips, straw or salt marsh hay

Resources

- Plumline Nursery: Native Alternatives to Traditional Plants
- Garden in the Woods
- West Newbury Wild and Native Demonstration Gardens
- Xerces Society
- Homegrown National Park
- Native Plant Trust
- Grow Native Massachusetts
- Mass.gov: Garden Centers and Nurseries That Sell Native Plants

Where to Buy

Small Nurseries

- Monarch Gardener, Ipswich, good variety & excellent prices
- Garden in the Woods, Framingham, great variety & prices
- Kings Tree Farm, Boxford, shrubs & trees

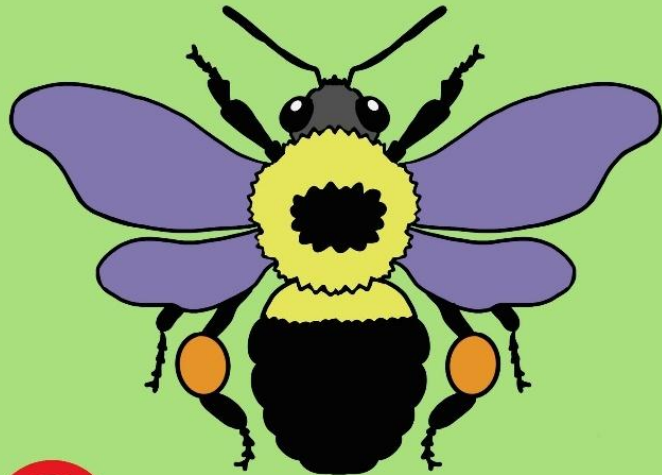
Garden Centers

- Less variety, medium price
- Wolf Hill (Gloucester, Ipswich)
 - Marblehead Garden Center (Marblehead)
 - Mahoneys

Wholesale

- Bagley Pond, Warner, NH, wholesale, great variety
- New England Wetland Plants, Hadley, wholesale, cheapest but less variety. More than just wetland plants

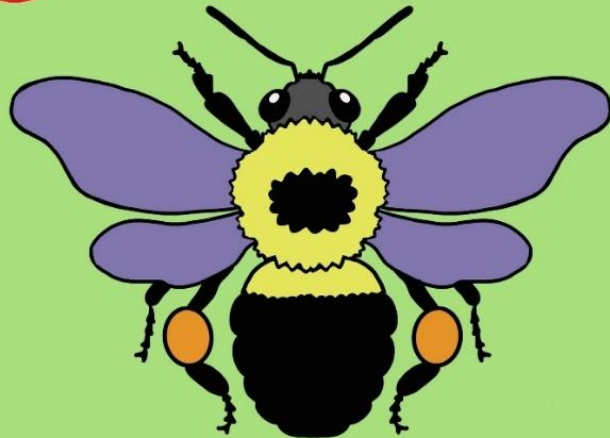
BEE GREEN



PESTICIDES



PESTICIDES



Get involved locally!

West Newbury Wild & Native. ACES. Merrimac
Neighbors for Nature. Pollinator Powerworks.
Amesbury Eco Gardeners. ©Jenn Houle 2025

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