

NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

WHAT IS A NATIVE PLANT?

A native plant is one that has been growing in a particular region since before European settlers arrived. These plants evolved and adapted to this habitat and are critical parts of the ecosystem.

WHY PLANT A NATIVE PLANT GARDEN?

Native plants are not only beautiful, but they also are important habitat for wildlife, providing food and shelter. They don't require fertilizers or pesticides, unlike many common horticultural plants. Planting a native plant garden helps promote biodiversity and stewardship of our natural heritage.

NORTHERN HARDWOODS

The species you see here are typical of Vermont's northern hardwood forests. Some, such as wild ginger, require richer soils, while others, such as bluebead lily, do not. Some plants take advantage of full sun in the spring before leaf-out, and others prefer summertime shade.

WHAT CAN I SEE HERE?

Native plants are important because they have **aesthetic, recreational, biological, medicinal, economic, and conservation value**. What can you find in the garden that fits one of these categories? Start by looking for the plants below:



The beautiful spring flowers of bluebead lily (*Clintonia borealis*) soon turn into showy blue fruits.



Toothwort (below) is the preferred host plant on which the uncommon West Virginia White butterfly lays its eggs.



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Blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), a medicinal plant, was also called *Papoose-root* by Native Americans, as it was used to induce labor.

SEE IF YOU CAN FIND:

- **Wild ginger:** Reddish-brown flowers hiding underneath the leaves in the spring
- **Ferns:** How many different types of ferns can you find?
- **Virginia waterleaf:** In spring, look for the spots on the leaves that give waterleaf its name
- **Jewelweed:** In late summer and fall, look for the seed pods which explode at the lightest touch. Why might they do this?
- **Wildlife:** Can you see any birds, insects or animals using the plants?

TRILLIUM: A SPECIAL STORY

How do plant seeds get from one place to another? In the case of trillium, ants do the job. Trillium seeds have an *elaiosome*



– a sugary appendage that ants love. Ants drag the seeds back to their anthills to eat the elaiosome, then discard the seeds in their compost pile. This provides a perfect,



nutrient-rich environment for the seeds to sprout. Both the ants and the trillium benefit!

It takes trillium 2 seasons to send up its first leaf, and at least seven years before it flowers. **This slow**

reproduction is an important reason not to collect or pick plants in the wild.

