

Native Plant List

Most of the plants listed are perennials. Forbs are herbaceous perennials. Shrubs are woody, usually less than 20 feet tall with multiple trunks. Trees are taller and usually do not form thickets. Wildlife value includes any special features of the plant which supply food or improve the habitat for birds, mammals, and beneficial insects such as parasitoids, predators and butterflies.

Zones

zone 1 upland areas, prairie, dry, sun or woodland, shade

zone 2 wet meadow, wet soil

zone 3 emergent, lake margin, shallow water

zone 4 submerged or floating leaf, aquatic

Light requirements (Sun)

○ = full sun, ◐ = part shade, ● = shade

Growth form

fern, forb (herbaceous perennial), grass, rush, sedge, shrub, tree

Easy to grow?

y = yes

Height

maximum height in feet



Common name	Species name	Zone	Sun	Growth	Easy?	Height	Wildlife Values	Other
maidenhair fern	<i>Adiantum pedatum</i>	1	●	fern		2		
ostrich fern	<i>Matteuccia pensylvanica</i>	1	●	fern		5		
sensitive fern	<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>	1	◐	fern	y	3		
interrupted fern	<i>Osmunda claytoniana</i>	1	◐	fern		4		interesting leaves
yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	1	○	forb		2	butterfly	may be weedy, medicinal, small white flowers
anise hyssop	<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>	1	○ to ◐	forb	y	3	bee, butterfly	blue flowers, long-blooming, licorice-scented leaves
prairie onion	<i>Allium stellatum</i>	1	○	forb		2		white or pink flowers, slender leaves
lead plant	<i>Amorpha canescens</i>	1	○	forb	y	3	bee, butterfly	purple flowers during the buffalo mating season
thimbleweed	<i>Anemone cylindrica</i>	1	○ to ◐	forb	y	2		white flowers in mid-spring
pasqueflower	<i>Anemone patens</i> (<i>Pulsatilla nuttalliana</i>)	1	○	forb		0.5	bee	signal for spring celebrations among the Dakota, mature plants difficult to transplant
wild columbine	<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>	1	○ to ◐	forb		2	bee, butterfly, hummingbird	red and yellow flowers with long spurs, self-sows
Canada wild ginger	<i>Asarum canadense</i>	1	◐ to ●	forb	y	0.5		ground cover, roots taste like ginger, strange brownish-red flowers
butterfly milkweed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	1	○ to ◐	forb		3	butterfly	bright orange flowers, roots once used medicinally
heath aster	<i>Aster ericoides</i>	1	○	forb		2	bee, butterfly	small white flowers in late fall, heather-like leaves
calico aster	<i>Aster lateriflorus</i>	1	◐ to ●	forb		4		blossoms once used to treat insanity
New England aster	<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	1	○ to ◐	forb		4		spreads rapidly, purple flowers in late summer, cut flower
sky-blue aster	<i>Aster oolentangiensis</i>	1	○ to ◐	forb		2.5	bee, butterfly	blue flowers in early fall

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silky aster	<i>Aster sericeus</i>	1	☉	forb		1.5	bee, butterfly	purple flowers, silky gray-green leaves, once used to treat arthritis
blue false indigo	<i>Baptisia australis</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		3	bee	blue flowers
golden asters	<i>Chrysopsis villosa</i> (<i>Heterotheca villosa</i>)	1	☉	forb		2		yellow aster-like flowers
coreopsis	<i>Coreopsis palmata</i>	1	☉	forb		3		yellow flowers, short-lived but self-sows
white prairie clover	<i>Dalea candida</i> (<i>Petalostemum candidum</i>)	1	☉	forb		3	butterfly	
purple prairie clover	<i>Dalea purpurea</i> (<i>Petalostemum purpureum</i>)	1	☉	forb		3	terrific bee and butterfly plant	little purple flowers with orange pollen, leaves fragrant when crushed
showy tick-trefoil	<i>Desmodium canadense</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb	y	5		pink flowers
dutchman's breeches	<i>Dicentra cucullaria</i>	1	☐	forb		0.5		leaves die back in summer
shooting star	<i>Dodecatheon media</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		1		early to bloom, slow to germinate, leaves die back in summer
purple coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb	y	4	butterfly	root once used for toothache, now thought to stimulate immune system
boneset	<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb	y	3	bee, butterfly	cut flower
queen-of-the-prairie	<i>Filipendula rubra</i>	1	☉	forb		6		fluffy bright pink flowers, spreads rapidly, once used as a love potion
bottle gentian	<i>Gentiana andrewsii</i>	1	☉	forb		2	bumblebee	blue flowers, seeds are slow to germinate
wild geranium	<i>Geranium maculatum</i>	1	☐	forb	y	2		pink flowers, spreads but is not invasive
prairie smoke	<i>Geum triflorum</i>	1	☉	forb	y	1		early red flowers followed by fluffy seedhead "smoke," groundcover
showy sunflower	<i>Helianthus laetiflorus</i>	1	☉	forb	y	4	bee, butterfly, bird	self-sows, cut flower
ox-eye	<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i>	1	☉	forb	y	3	butterfly	yellow flowers, cut flower, long blooming season
round-headed bush clover	<i>Lespedeza capitata</i>	1	☉	forb		4	bee, seeds eaten by bird	
blazing star	<i>Liatris species</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		4	bee, butterfly, bird	pink spikes, cut flower, once fed to horses to make them run faster
Michigan lily	<i>Lilium michiganense</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		4		orange flowers, bulbs are edible
wild lupine	<i>Lupinus perennis</i>	1	☉	forb		2	bee	showy blue flowers in spikes, early-bloomers, self-sows
Virginia bluebells	<i>Mertensia virginica</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb	y	2		blue flowers, plants die back after blooming
wild bergamot; beebalm	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb	y	2	bumblebee, butterfly	lavender flowers, leaves used to make tea, leaves tend to mildew
large-flowered beardtongue	<i>Penstemon grandiflorus</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		2	bumblebee, hummingbird	early showy pink flowers, will not tolerate competition
mayapple	<i>Podophyllum peltatum</i>	1	☐	forb		1		spreading ground cover, white flowers, edible fruits
Jacob's ladder	<i>Polemonium reptans</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb	y	1		blue flowers
true Solomon's seal	<i>Polygonatum biflorum</i>	1	☐	forb		4		green flowers, blue berries, roots used medicinally
mountain mint	<i>Pycnanthemum virginianum</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		1.5		fragrant when crushed, white flowers
gray-headed coneflower	<i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	1	☉	forb	y	3	bee, butterfly	yellow flowers
black-eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	1	☉	forb	y	2	bee, butterfly	yellow flowers with black center
bloodroot	<i>Sanguinaria canadensis</i>	1	● to ☐	forb		1		white flowers are short-lived, groundcover, red dye from rhizomes

Common name	Species name	Zone	Sun	Growth	Easy?	Height	Wildlife Values	Other
compass plant	<i>Silphium laciniatum</i>	1	☉	forb		6	bee, butterfly, bird	yellow flowers, deeply cut leaves
cup-plant	<i>Silphium perfoliatum</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		6	bee, butterfly	shaggy yellow flowers, prairie moths bore into stems, roots used medicinally
false Solomon's seal	<i>Smilacina racemosa</i>	1	☐	forb	y	3		white flowers followed by red berries
gray goldenrod	<i>Solidago nemoralis</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		2	bee, butterfly	yellow flowers in late summer, graceful form
showy goldenrod	<i>Solidago speciosa</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		4	bee, butterfly	yellow flowers in spikes
spiderwort	<i>Tradescantia ohiensis</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		1		pink or purple flowers liquefy by noon, once used as a cure for spider bites
bellwort	<i>Uvularia grandiflora</i>	1	☐ to ●	forb	y	1		nodding yellow flowers in early spring, pioneers used early shoots for greens
blue vervain	<i>Verbena hastata</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		4	bee, butterfly	blue flowers in spikes
hoary vervain	<i>Verbena stricta</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb	y	4	cover	purple flowers in spikes, tolerant of disturbance
Culver's root	<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb		6	bee, butterfly	white flowers in spikes, cut flower
common blue violet	<i>Viola papilionacea</i>	1	☉ to ☐	forb	y	0.5	wild turkey eat the roots	groundcover, may be invasive
bird's-foot violet	<i>Viola pedata</i>	1	☉	forb		0.5	butterfly	purple flowers in early spring, not a good competitor, leaves are food for caterpillars
golden alexanders	<i>Zizia aurea</i>	1	☉	forb	y	2.5		yellow flowers in spring, glossy leaves
big bluestem	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	1	☉	grass	y	8	cover, seeds	king of native grasses, red-brown in winter, leaves once applied to infected wounds
sideoats grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	1	☉	grass		2	cover, seeds	
switchgrass	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	1	☉	grass		5	cover, seeds	golden or reddish in fall
little bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium/</i> <i>Andropogon scoparius</i>	1	☉	grass		3	cover, seeds	reddish purple winter color
Indian grass	<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>	1	☉	grass	y	6	cover, seeds	
New Jersey tea	<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>	1	☉ to ☐	shrub		3	bee, butterfly	white flowers in June and July, leaves once used as tea
American hazelnut	<i>Corylus americana</i>	1	☉	shrub		9	nuts	
wild plum	<i>Prunus americana</i>	1	☉ to ☐	shrub	y	20	bee, berries	fragrant white flowers, use fruit for jam
common chokecherry	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	1	☉ to ●	shrub	y	20	berries	fragrant white flowers, use berries for jam
smooth sumac	<i>Rhus glabra</i>	1	☉	shrub	y	9		fall color, plant on steep slopes to prevent erosion
wild rose	<i>Rosa arkansana</i>	1	☉	shrub	y	3	winter food for birds	pink flowers, red hips containing vitamin C, spreads by suckers
American elderberry	<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	1	☉ to ☐	shrub	y	9	berries	fragrant white flowers, use purple berries for jam or in muffins
American highbush cranberry	<i>Viburnum trilobum</i>	1	☉ to ☐	shrub		12	berries	white flowers, leaves turn red in fall, red berries persist through winter
climbing prairie rose	<i>Rosa setigera</i>	1	☉	shrub or vine		6	bee, butterfly winter food for birds	pink flowers, red hips
white oak	<i>Quercus alba</i>	1	☉	tree		60	acorns, nesting sites	best fall color of the oaks, plant acorns as soon as they fall
bur oak	<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	1	☉	tree		60	acorns, nesting sites	fine shape
red oak	<i>Quercus rubra</i>	1	☉	tree		75	acorns, nesting sites	susceptible to oak wilt
black locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	1	☉	tree		60	bee	fragrant white flowers

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mountain ash	<i>Sorbus americanus</i>	1	○ to ►	tree		30	berries	white flowers, orange berries, the rowan tree of Celtic mythology
basswood	<i>Tilia americana</i>	1	○ to ►	tree	y	120		tiny green fragrant flowers, inner bark used to make rope
Jack-in-the-pulpit	<i>Arisaema triphyllum</i>	1,2	○ to ►	forb		1.5		distinctive green flowers and red berries, tubers are edible but must be cooked
wild white indigo	<i>Baptisia alba (lactea)</i>	1,2	○ to ►	forb	y	2	bee	white flowers on spikes, once used for blue dye
turtlehead	<i>Chelone glabra</i>	1,2	○ to ►	forb		2	bee, butterfly	white or pink flowers
Joe pye weed	<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i>	1,2	○ to ►	forb		5	bee, butterfly	fragrant fuzzy pink flowers, Joe Pye was a Native American herbalist
prairie cord grass	<i>Spartina pectinata</i>	1,2	○	grass		4	cover, muskrat eat roots	burned as fuel during the "Long Winter" (Laura Ingalls Wilder)
bottlebrush sedge	<i>Carex comosa</i>	2,3	○	sedge		4	cover	
red maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>	1,2	○	tree		45	nesting sites	red or yellow leaves in fall
blue flag	<i>Iris versicolor</i>	2,3	○	forb		3	bee, butterfly, cover	blue or lavender flowers
swamp white oak	<i>Quercus bicolor</i>	1,2	○ to ►	tree		60	acorns	tolerates wet soils, acorns once eaten by Native Americans
jewelweed	<i>Impatiens capensis</i>	2	►	annual forb	y	4	bee	orange flowers, seed pods pop open, juice relieves itching
crested fern	<i>Dryopteris cristata</i>	2	●	fern		2	butterfly, wild turkey eat the roots	
royal fern	<i>Osmunda regalis</i>	2	○ to ►	fern		5		young fiddleheads are edible
marsh fern	<i>Thelypteris palustris</i>	2	►	fern		2		
swamp milkweed	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	2	○ to ►	forb		4	bee, butterfly	rose to pink flowers, cut flower, edible flowers, roots used medicinally
scouring rush	<i>Equisetum hyemale</i>	2	○ to ►	forb		3		best in sandy soils, a primitive plant from the age of dinosaurs
purple avens	<i>Geum rivale</i>	2	○	forb		1.5		
sneezeweed	<i>Helenium autumnale</i>	2	○	forb		4		cut flower
cardinal flower	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	2	○ to ►	forb		4	butterfly, hummingbird	bright red flowers, roots used as love charm
great blue lobelia	<i>Lobelia syphillica</i>	2	○ to ►	forb		3	bee, butterfly	blue flowers in spikes, used medicinally
fringed loosestrife	<i>Lysimachia ciliata</i>	2	○	forb	y	3	bee, butterfly	small green flowers with cut leaves, roots may contain an anti-cancer drug
tall meadowrue	<i>Thalictrum dasycarpum</i>	2	○ to ►	forb	y	4		
prairie ironweed	<i>Vernonia fasciculata</i>	2	○	forb	y	5	bee, butterfly	pink flowers in late summer, cut flower
swamp saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga pensylvanica</i>	2	○	sedge		3		green flowers in spike
smooth alder	<i>Alnus rugosa</i>	2	○ to ►	shrub	y	25		
Saskatoon	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	2	○ to ►	shrub	y	20	birds love the fruit	white flowers
meadowsweet	<i>Spirea alba</i>	2	○	shrub		6	bee, butterfly	showy white flowers, cut flower
black ash	<i>Fraxinus nigra</i>	2	○ to ►	tree	y	75	seeds	pleasant aroma
black spruce	<i>Picea mariana</i>	2	○	tree	y	45	dense cover for nesting bird	prefers acid soil
cottonwood	<i>Populus deltoides</i>	2	○	tree	y	50		yellow in fall
black willow	<i>Salix nigra</i>	2	○ to ►	tree	y	60	bee, butterfly	
northern white cedar	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	2	○	tree	y	30	dense cover for nesting birds, winter cover	
sweet flag	<i>Acorus calamus</i>	2	○	forb		6		rhizomes have sweet fragrance when cut or bruised

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marsh marigold	<i>Caltha palustris</i>	2	☉	forb		1.5		shiny yellow flowers in May, foliage dies back in summer
spike rush	<i>Eleocharis species</i>	2,3	☉	rush		1.5	cover	
soft rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>	2,3	☉	rush		3.5	cover, muskrat eat roots	
rice cutgrass	<i>Leersia oryzoides</i>	2,3	☉	grass		3		
pickerelweed	<i>Pontederia cordata</i>	2,3	☉	forb	y	3		deep blue flowers in spikes
arrowhead	<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>	2,3	☉	forb	y	3	cover, food	
hard-stem bulrush	<i>Scirpus acutus</i>	2,3	☉	rush		8	cover, food	
Canada bluejoint grass	<i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i>	2,3	☉	grass		4	cover, food	stands up well in water
giant manna grass	<i>Glyceria grandis</i>	2,3	☉	grass		5	cover	
lake sedge	<i>Carex lacustris</i>	2,3	☉	sedge		3	cover, food	
tussock sedge	<i>Carex stricta</i>	2,3	☉	sedge		2	cover	forms hummocks
green bulrush	<i>Scirpus atrovirens</i>	2,3	☉	rush	y	4	cover	
wool grass	<i>Scirpus cyperinus</i>	2,3	☉	rush		5	cover, food	fuzzy nutlets
river bulrush	<i>Scirpus fluviatilis</i>	2,3	☉	rush		6	cover, food for muskrat	
black chokeberry	<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	2,3	☉	shrub		9	berries	white flowers in June followed by black fruits, glossy leaves
buttonbush	<i>Cephaanthus occidentalis</i>	2,3	☉ to ►	shrub		9	butterfly	
red osier dogwood	<i>Cornus sericea (stolonifera)</i>	2,3	☉ to ►	shrub	y	18	berries	red stems add winter color, twigs used to make baskets
marsh cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla palustris</i>	2,3	☉ to ►	shrubby		1.5		red or purple flowers
pussy willow	<i>Salix discolor</i>	2,3	☉ to ►	shrub		20	bee	fuzzy catkins are a sign of spring, cuttings can be rooted
water plantain	<i>Alisma plantago-aquatica</i>	3	☉	forb	y	2.5		
bur-reed	<i>Sparganium americanum</i>	3	☉ to ►	forb		5	duck, muskrat	poor germination from seed
cattail	<i>Typha latifolia</i>	3		forb				
American lotus	<i>Nelumbo lutea</i>	4	☉	forb		floating	food	yellow flowers, need a rich muddy bottom, rhizomes and seeds were Native American foods
water celery	<i>Valisneria americana</i>	4		forb				
spatterdock	<i>Nuphar advena</i>	4	☉	forb		floating	food for muskrat, deer, beaver, moose and porcupine	cup-shaped yellow flowers, plant the rhizomes in mud, rhizomes are edible
white waterlily	<i>Nymphaea odorata</i>	4	☉	forb		floating	food	pure white fragrant flowers, plant rhizomes in fall in fertile mud