



PLANT THIS NOT THAT

A Michigan Guide for Native Plant Alternatives

This guide was created to provide Michigan gardeners with alternative native plant options for invasive or non-native plants.

WHY NATIVE PLANTS?

- They are beneficial to pollinators because they support the entire pollinator lifecycle.
- They provide habitat to native insects, pollinators, birds, and other animals who have co-evolved with them for hundreds of years.
- They are accustomed to local climate so are hardy and easy to establish.

The increase of exotic plants (non-native) added in garden spaces and encroaching in natural areas is causing an ecological desert for pollinating insects that are essential to our survival.



WHAT TO PLANT?

Our native plant alternatives were chosen based on size, sun exposure and overall look and feel. We will continue to update this document over time as we discover additional alternatives.

PLANTS

SHRUBS

GRASSES

BUSHES

TREES



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 **PLANTS**

INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

SIZE AND EXPOSURE

BENEFITS

Day Lily



Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)



- Grows 1'-3' tall
- Full sun
- Dry to average moisture

Pollinator plant to bees and host plant to Monarch butterfly.

Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)



- Grows 2'-4' tall
- Plant 1'-3' apart
- Full to part sun
- Average to wet moisture

Hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees are the primary pollinators for the coneflower. Finches will eat the flower seeds from fall through winter.

English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)



Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)



- Grows 50'-70' tall
- Full to part sun and full shade
- Dry, average or wet moisture

A larval host for several species of Sphinx moths and birds feed from the flowers, fruit and seeds.

Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana* dvuchesne)



- Grows .5'-1' tall
- Full to part sun and full shade
- Average moisture

Host plant to 82 species of butterfly and moth caterpillars.

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INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Hosta



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

Heartleaf Foam Flower (*Tiarella cordifolium* L.)



- Grows 1'-3' tall
- Full shade
- Average moisture

BENEFITS

Excellent ground cover and the airy white flowers attract pollinators.

Alum Root (*Heuchera americana*)



- Grows 1'-3' tall
- Full to part shade
- Average moisture

Small bell-shaped flowers that appear in early summer on the tall stems.

Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)



- Grows 1'-2' tall
- Full to part sun or shade
- Average moisture

Pale pink to lavender flowers that bloom from mid-May to early June. Attracts specialist Andrenid bee as well as Syrphid flies and butterflies.

Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*)



Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*)



- Grows 4'-6' tall
- Full sun
- Average to wet moisture

Bees are the primary pollinators of this plants.

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 **GRASSES**

INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Zebra Grass (*Miscanthus sinensis*)



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

Switch Grass (*Panicum virgatum*)



- Grows 3'-5' tall
- Full to part sun
- Dry, average to wet moisture

Over 70 different butterflies and moths depend on native grasses as part of their lifecycles.

Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*)



- Grows 4'-6' tall
- Full sun
- Average moisture

Provides protection from severe weather and from predators, as well as nesting and roosting spaces. Host plant for Skipper butterflies.

Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)



- Grows 5'-7' tall
- Full sun
- Dry, average to wet moisture

Leaves are eaten by grasshoppers, katydids, and caterpillars of some skippers.

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INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Fountain Grass
(*Pennisetum alopecuroides*)



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)



- Grow 1'-3' tall
- Full sun
- Average moisture

Host plant for the Leonard's skipper butterfly and is a great nesting site for native bees.

Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)



- Grows 2'-4' tall
- Full sun
- Dry to average moisture

Host plant for nine skipper species.

Side Oats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)



- Grows 1'-4' tall
- Full sun
- Dry to average moisture

Larval host plant for several Skipper butterflies and moths.

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INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Blue Fescue



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)



- Grow 1'-3' tall
- Full sun
- Average moisture

BENEFITS

Host plant for the Leonard's skipper butterfly and is a great nesting site for native bees.

Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)



- Grows 2'-4' tall
- Full sun
- Dry to average moisture

Host plant for nine skipper species.

Nodding Wild Onion (*Allium cernuum*)



- Grows 1'-2' tall
- Full sun to part shade
- Average moisture

Butterfly host plant and nectar flower for bees. Cellophane bees are one of the primary visitors of this plant.

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 **SHRUBS**

 **BUSHES**

INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

SIZE AND EXPOSURE

BENEFITS

Boxwood Shrubs (*Buxus* spp)



New Jersey Tee (*Ceanothus americanus*)



- Grows 1'-3' tall
- Full to part sun
- Dry to average moisture

Compact plant with beautiful blooms. Deep roots make it drought tolerant. Attracts at least 13 butterfly species. Host for summer azure butterfly larva.

Burning Bush (*Euonymus Alatus*)



Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)



- Grows 4'-5' tall and 4'-6' wide
- Full to part sun
- Dry to average moisture

Berries provide food over the winter. Attracts: birds, butterflies and bees. Also, a larval host plant. Keep in mind this plant will spread.

Arrowwood Viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*)



- Grows 6'-8' tall and 4'-6' wide
- Full to part sun
- Average to wet moisture

Attracts birds, butterflies and bees. Larval host to spring azure butterfly and hummingbird moths.

Northern Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)



- Grows 6'-12' tall
- Part to full shade
- Average to wet moisture

Larval host to eastern tiger swallowtail, spicebush swallowtail and promethea silkmoth. Northern spicebush also smells wonderful.

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INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Honeysuckle (Lonicera spp.)



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

American Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)



- Grows 5'-12" tall and 6'-10' wide
- Full to part sun
- Average to wet moisture

BENEFITS

Benefits pollinators and provides fruit for birds. The flat topped flower clusters a really good for generalist pollinators.

Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)



- Grows 3'-10' tall
- Full to part sun and full shade
- Dry, average to wet moisture

Host plant for butterflies. Provides seeds and berries for birds.

Arrowwood Viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*)



- Grows 6'-8' tall and 4'-6' wide
- Full to part sun
- Average to wet moisture

Attracts birds, butterflies and bees. Larval host to Spring Azure butterfly and Hummingbird moth.

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INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Butterfly Bush (Buddleia Davidii)



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

New Jersey Tee (Ceanothus americanus)



- Grows 1'-3' tall
- Full to part sun
- Dry to average moisture
- Drought tolerant

BENEFITS

Compact plant with beautiful blooms. Deep roots make it drought tolerant. Attracts at least 13 butterfly species. Host for Summer Azure butterfly larva.

Joe Pye Weed (Eupatorium maculatum)



- Grows 4'-5' tall
- Full to part sun
- Average to wet moisture

An excellent nectar source for pollinators. Host plant.

Giant Blue Hyssop (Agastache foeniculum)



- Grows 2'-4' tall
- Part sun
- Average to wet moisture

Attracts and support native bees, provisioning for honey bees.

Ironweed (Vernonia missurica)



- Grows 4'-6' tall
- Full to part sun
- Average to wet moisture

Special value to native bees.

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INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Japanese Barberry
(*Berberis thunbergii*)
Common Barberry
(*Berberis vulgaris*)



Japanese Spirea
(*Spiraea japonica*)



Privets (*Ligustrum* spp.)



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

New Jersey Tea (*Ceanothus americanus*)



- Grows 1'-3' tall
- Full to part sun
- Dry to average moisture
- Drought tolerant

Compact plant with beautiful blooms. Deep roots make it drought tolerant. Attracts at least 13 butterfly species. Host for Summer Azure butterfly larva.

Common Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) *Native



- Grows 3'-9' tall and 6'-10' wide
- Full to part sun
- Average to wet moisture

Four-season interest. Supports wildlife. Special value to native bees.

Blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*)



- Grows 15'-30' tall
- Part Shade
- Average to wet moisture

Fruit is consumed by songbirds, gamebird, and mammals. Larval food plant for Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly.

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TREES

INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Bradford pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)
Callery Pear, Cleveland Select,
Autumn Blaze



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

Blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*)



- Grows 15'-30' tall
- Part shade
- Average to wet moisture

Fruit is consumed by songbirds, gamebird, and mammals.

Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)



- Grows 12'-25' tall
- Full to part sun
- Average moisture

Larvae host plant for butterflies and nectar plant for butterflies and bees. Leaves are used by Leaf-cutter bees for nesting materials and the seeds are eaten by chickadees.

Pagoda Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*)



- Grows 15'-25' tall
- Full to part sun
- Average moisture

Larvae host plant for butterflies and nectar plant for bees. Robins love to eat the berries. Larval food for Summer Azure and Cecropia moth.

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INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Common Buckthorn
(*Phamnus cathartica*)



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor*)



- Grows 6'-20' tall
- Full sun
- Wet moisture

BENEFITS

Blooms very early in the season and is an important spring plant for pollinators. Attracts bees.

American Hazelnut (*Corylus Americana*)



- Grows 5'-9' tall
- Full to part sun
- Dry to average moisture

Many insects and birds feed on the leaves and nuts of this tree. It also supports several moth and insect larvae.

Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*)



Pagoda Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*)



- Grows 15'-25' tall
- Full to part sun
- Average moisture

Larvae host plant for butterflies and nectar plant for bees.

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INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)



SIZE AND EXPOSURE

- Grows 40'-60' tall
- Full sun to part shade
- Average moisture

BENEFITS

Provides nectar for pollinators and is a host plant.

Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*)



- Grows 40'-80' tall
- Full sun to part shade
- Average to wet moisture

Early spring source of food for sapsuckers and hummingbirds. Late spring flowers for bees.

Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*)



Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)



- Grows 50'-80' tall
- Full sun
- Average moisture

Michigan's state tree. Many moth caterpillars feed on the pines including the *Callophrys nipon* butterfly.

Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens*)



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INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Weeping Willow (*Salix babylonica*)



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

Swamp White Oak (*Quercus bicolor*)



SIZE AND EXPOSURE

- Grows 50'-80' tall
- Full sun
- Average to wet moisture

BENEFITS

Oak trees support more than 300 pollinators including Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterflies and Sphinx moths.

Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)



- Grows 70'-100' tall
- Full sun
- Average to dry moisture

Seeds are eaten by finches, sparrows, Mourning doves and wild turkeys.

Tulip Poplar/Tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)



- Grows 60'-110'
- Full to part sun
- Average to wet moisture

Supports 17 species of butterflies and moths including Spicebush and Eastern Tiger Swallowtail and Luna moth. Dramatic flowers and is beetle populated.

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INVASIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Weeping Cherry
(*Prunus subhirtella*)



NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVE

Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)



SIZE AND EXPOSURE

- Grows 12'-25' tall
- Full to part sun
- Average moisture

BENEFITS

Larvae host plant for butterflies and nectar plant for butterflies and bees. Leaves are used by Leaf-cutter bees for nesting materials and the seeds are eaten by chickadees.