

RESOURCES

Books:

- *Bees: An Identification and Native Plant Forage Guide*. By Heather N. Holm. Pollination Press, 2017. Any book by local author Heather Holm is well-researched, well-written, and wise.
- *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants*, updated edition. By Douglas W. Tallamy. Timber Press, 2009. Though not even a decade old, a classic and essential text.
- *Pollinators of Native Plants: Attract, Observe and Identify Pollinators and Beneficial Insects with Native Plants*. By Heather N. Holm. Pollination Press, 2014.
- *Landscaping with Native Plants of Minnesota*, 2nd edition. By Lynn M. Steiner. Voyageur Press, 2011.
- *Landscaping with Native Plants of Wisconsin*. By Lynn M. Steiner. Voyageur Press, 2007.
- *Native Plants of the Midwest: A Comprehensive Guide to the Best 500 Species for the Garden*. By Alan Branham. Timber Press, 2016. Basically glorified catalogue, but comprehensive and providing good core information on each species.
- *The Tallgrass Prairie Center Guide to Prairie Restoration in the Upper Midwest*. By Darryl Smith, Dave Williams, Greg Houseal, and Kirk Henson. University of Iowa Press, 2010.
- *The Tallgrass Prairie Center Guide to Seed and Seedling Identification*. By Dave Williams. University of Iowa Press, 2010.
- *100 Plants to Feed the Bees: Provide a Healthy Habitat to Help Pollinators Thrive*. By the Xerces Society. Storey Publishing, 2016.

Nurseries:

Most of these nurseries sell seed, bare root stock, and/or live plants by mail order. Some offer design, consulting, and landscaping services.

- Mother Earth Gardens. Minneapolis, MN, at 2318 NE Lowry Avenue and 3738 42nd Avenue South. I do shop here because they are local but this is not an outfit committed to native plant gardening. The staff has scant knowledge of native plants, and they are lackadaisical about mislabeled plants.
- Prairie Moon Nursery. Winona, MN. Their print and online catalog and web site search features are comprehensive and very helpful. www.prairiemoon.com
- Out Back Nursery. Hastings, MN. Their plants are usually bigger and hardier and therefore more expensive. A particularly rich selection of native trees and shrubs. www.outbacknursery.com
- Prairie Restorations. Minnesota locations in Princeton, Scandia, Northfield, Moorhead, Watertown, Lewiston, and Cloquet/Duluth (d/b/a Boreal Natives). www.prairieresto.com
- Kinnickinnic Natives. Eau Claire, WI. www.kinninatives.com
- Other alternatives for acquiring plants: Look out for Wild Ones plant sales. The creators of the Minnesota Wildflowers web site (MinnesotaWildflowers.info) have a plant sale every year with very reasonable prices for well-established plants. Members of online groups (such as the Native Plant Gardens in the Upper Midwest Facebook page mentioned below) are often open to swapping plants and seed. If you are adventurous and have good plant identification skills, learn about collecting native seed (where you can collect and how to collect responsibly).

Organizations:

- Wild Ones: www.wildones.org. Minnesota Chapters: Arrowhead (Duluth), Big River Big Woods (St. Paul / East Metro), Northfield Prairie Partners (Cannon Valley / Northfield), Prairie Edge (Chanhausen), St Cloud, St Croix Oak Savanna (Stillwater), Twin Cities (Minneapolis).
- Corcoran Pollinator Project, for those living in that Minneapolis neighborhood. <https://corcoranpollinatorproject.org/>
- Longfellow Community Wildlife Habitat Project: <https://longfellowwildlife.blogspot.com/>

Online:

- Facebook groups dedicated to native plant gardening: Native Plant Gardens in the Upper Midwest (started by Wild Ones member Julia Lundmark Vanatta): www.facebook.com/groups/466260610200990. Share your challenges and triumphs, ask questions, learn from others.
- Landscaping with Native Plants, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: www.dnr.state.mn.us/gardens/nativeplants/. Links to a variety of resources, including a 13-page brochure “How to Use Native Plants for Landscaping and Restoration” (PDF), an article offering “Information on Transplanting Lady’s-Slipper Orchids” (PDF), links to further information and resources under the Restore Your Shore program, links to further information on Minnesota’s Pollinators, and information on native plant suppliers and landscapers.
- Rain Gardens: A How-To Manual for Homeowners. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and University of Wisconsin–Extension, 2003. PDF at <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/shorelandzoning/documents/rgmanual.pdf>.
- Silver Plains Project: www.silverplains.ca. A fascinating, in-depth blog by Robert Mears on the restoration to native prairie of a five-acre site in Morris, Manitoba.
- BWSR pollinator toolbox: <http://bwsr.state.mn.us/pollinator-toolbox>
- Indigenous Landscapes (Ohio-based nursery and publisher of books about native plant gardening): <https://indigescapes.com/>
- beelab.umn.edu
- bumblebeewatch.org
- <https://backyardbbcount.wixsite.com/bumblebeecount>
- <https://xerces.org/publications/habitat-assessment-guides/habitat-assessment-guide-for-pollinators-in-yards-gardens>

NATIVE GRASSES AND SEDGES

POPULAR, BEAUTIFUL, AND VERSATILE NATIVE GRASSES. Because grasses and sedges are wind-pollinated they are not of direct importance to bees and other insect pollinators. However, their leaves are fed on by various insects and the larvae of skippers, butterflies, and moths. They provide protective habitat for birds and ground mammals. Their seed is an important source of winter food for birds.

They are so variable in form, height, growth habit, color, and texture that they are easily integrated into any type of garden or landscaping design. Many can be readily started from seed. I have found sedges to be particularly easy to work with, and while they are great accents in shady or wet areas, they are by no means restricted to these uses! I have compiled a “greatest hits” list of some of the most versatile, beautiful, and interesting grasses and sedges.

Abbreviations used: FS = full sun, PS = part shade, S = (full) shade.

W = wet, WM = wet to medium moisture, M = medium moisture, DM = dry to medium moisture, D = dry.

Cool-season grasses actively grow in spring, early summer, and fall; but growth is slowed during mid-summer when temperatures exceed 80°F.

Warm-season grasses actively grow in mid-summer when temperatures regularly exceed 80°F.

Andropogon gerardii. Big Bluestem. Full sun to part shade. WM-M-DM-D. Flowers June–September, height to 7 ft. Warm season perennial bunchgrass, easy to grow from seed. Can be aggressive. Fall color gold to pink. Iconic grass of tallgrass prairie.

Bouteloua curtipendula. Side-oats Grama. FS – PS. M-DM-D. Flowers August & September, height to 2 ft. Warm season, easy to grow from seed. Tiny attractive flowers with red-purple anthers dangling beneath white stigmas. Rhizomatous and clumping.

Bouteloua gracilis. Blue Grama. FS – PS. DM-D. Flowers July–September, height to 1 ft. Warm season, easy to grow from seed. Clump-forming. Resembles eyelashes on a stick! Can be seeded in as a native lawn alternative mixed with Buffalo Grass.

Bromus ciliatus. Fringed Brome. FS – PS. W-WM. Flowers July–September, height to 4 ft. Cool season. With large, drooping seedheads, fringed brome is similar in appearance to Prairie Brome, though adapted to much different habitat.

Bromus kalmii. Prairie Brome. FS – PS. WM-M-DM. Flowers June–August, height to 3 ft. Cool season, easy to grow from seed but short-lived. Seeds an attractive blue-gray turning to tan when ripe. Weight of the many seeds on each stem cause them to droop gracefully

Buchloe dactyloides. Buffalo Grass. FS. M-MD-D. Flowers May–August, height to 5 in. Warm season, rhizomatous. A common native substitute for lawn grasses, often with Blue Grama. Hardy at high latitudes, drought-tolerant, short enough to require little mowing to look tidy. Usually sold as a cultivar (“nativar”).

Carex blanda. Common Wood Sedge. FS – PS – S. W-WM-M-DM. Flowers May–June. 2'. Cool season, tufted sedge. Very versatile in terms of site. Creates a low-mounded profile that is a useful landscape accent. Deer- and rabbit-resistant.

Carex muskingumensis. Palm Sedge. FS – PS – S. WM-M-DM. Flowers July, height to 3 ft. Easy to grow from seed. Tufted. Desired for its attractive “palm” form, clumping habit, and adaptability to different light regimes.

Carex pensylvanica. Pennsylvania Sedge. FS – PS – S. M-DM-D. Flowers May & June, height to 8 in. Cool season, rhizomatous, difficult to start from seed. Tolerant of dry soil and can grow in full sun to full shade. Can be divided annually (spreads 3–8 inches per year).

Chasmanthium latifolium. River Oats. PS. WM-M. Flowers July–October, height to 3 ft. Highly ornamental, with drooping inflorescences and compressed spikelets, pale green drying to golden-brown. Native to one county in Wisconsin and in Alberta.

Elymus canadensis. Canada Wild Rye. PS – S. WM-M-DM-D. Flowers July–October, height to 5 ft. Cool season, easy to grow from seed. Quick to establish in a planting but not aggressively dominant, eventually giving way to other grasses and wildflowers.

Elymus hystrix. Bottlebrush Grass. PS – S. M-DM. Flowers June–August, height to 3 ft. Cool season, easy to grow from seed. Provides texture and interest in shaded areas.

Eragrostis spectabilis. Sand Love Grass. FS – PS. D. Flowers July & August, height to 2 ft. Warm season, sandy site, EASY TO GROW FROM SEED. Reaches 1–2 feet even in the driest, poorest soils, thriving in full sun and on sand substrate or even in rock gardens. It can withstand road salt and grow under black walnut trees. In large groups they create a purple haze on the landscape.

Hierochloa odorata. Sweet Grass. FS – PS. W-WM-M. Flowers May–July, height to 2 ft. Cool season, aromatic, rhizomatous, and aggressive, spreading about 2 feet per year. Can be difficult to eliminate if it spreads to where it is not wanted, so plant carefully. Can grow in almost any soil that receives a minimum of a half day of sun.

Koeleria macrantha. June Grass. FS – PS. DM-D. Flowers May–July, height to 2 ft. Cool season, sandy site, easy to grow from seed. Flowers earlier than most other upland prairie grasses, hence its name.

Green-gray foliage from which emerges a straight tuft of silvery-green seedheads that dry to tan. Likes dry sunny conditions and so is popular on green roofs.

Panicum virgatum. Switch Grass. FS – PS. WM-M-DM-D. Flowers July–September, height to 4 ft. Warm season, easy to grow from seed, rhizomatous and clump-forming. With its aggressive growth, it is not suited to small landscapes. Most attractive in later stages, with purple cloud-like seedheads and foliage that dries to a golden color. With sturdy stems it holds up under snow, providing winter cover for small animals and ground-dwelling birds as well as seed for birds.

Schizachyrium scoparium. Little Bluestem. Full sun to part shade. M-DM-D. Flowers July–October, height to 3 ft. Warm season perennial bunchgrass, easy to grow from seed. Marvelous for landscaping. Iconic grass of both shortgrass and tallgrass prairie: used in shortgrass restorations along with side-oats grama, in tallgrass along with big bluestem, Indian grass, and switchgrass. Color blue green that turns brown, copper, and crimson in fall. Magnet for insects that feed on the leaves and seeds.

Sorghastrum nutans. Indian Grass. FS – PS. M-DM-D. Flowers August–September, height to 6°ft. Warm season, easy to grow from seed. Spreads by rhizomes, can be aggressive, so not suited for small landscapes. One of the first warm-season grasses to form seedheads, which are rich clusters of bronze.

Spartina pectinata. Cord Grass. FS – PS. W-WM-M. Flowers July–September, height to 8 ft. Warm season, rhizomatous and aggressive. Spreads by rhizomes and can be aggressive so not suited for small landscapes. Can combat reed canary grass at water's edge.

Sporobolus heterolepis. Prairie Dropseed. FS – PS. WM-M-DM-D. Flowers August–October, height to 3 ft. Warm season, tufted, ornamental. Beautiful tussock-forming growth habit. Fall to winter its color is golden. Thrives in hot, dry conditions. Declining in its native habitat. Slow to establish.

NATIVE SHRUBS

* = Available from Out Back Nursery // ** = Available from Prairie Moon Nursery

Species with scientific name highlighted are excellent and adaptable choices!

Habitat preferences are general, but look into the needs and preferences of each species of interest.

Wet (usually thrives on mesic sites)

- */** *Amorpha fruticosa*false indigo
- */** ***Cephalanthus occidentalis***button bush
- */** *Cornus amomum*silky dogwood
- */** ***Cornus sericea***red-osier dogwood
- Dirca palustris*leatherwood
- * ***Ilex verticillata***winterberry
- * *Lonicera oblongifolia*swamp fly honeysuckle vine
- * *Lonicera villosa*mountain fly honeysuckle vine
- Myrica gale*sweet gale
- Nemopanthus mucronatus*mountain-holly
- Prunus americana***American wild plum
- * *Ribes americanum*wild black currant
- * *Ribes cynosbati*prickly gooseberry
- Ribes glandulosum*skunk currant
- Rubus arcticus*Arctic dwarf shrub (< 1') raspberry
- * *Salix bebbiana*Bebb's willow grows to 23'

- * *Salix candida*sage-leaf willow
- */** ***Salix discolor***pussy willow grows to 33'
- * *Salix interior*.....sandbar willow..... grows to 20'
- * *Salix lucida*shining willow
- * *Salix petiolaris*slender-leaved willow
- */** *Sambucus nigra* ssp. *canadensis*American elderberry
- */ ***Spiraea alba***meadowsweet
- * *Spiraea tomentosa*hardhack, steeplebush
- Taxus canadensis***Canada yew

Prairie or Dry Sites

- * *Amorpha canescens*.....lead plant
 - */** ***Ceanothus americana***New Jersey tea
 - Ceanothus herbaceus*narrow-leaved New Jersey tea
 - */** ***Corylus americanus***American hazel
 - Hudsonia tomentosa*beach heath
 - Prunus nigra***Canada plum
 - Prunus pumila*.....sand cherry
 - Rosa arkansana***.....prairie wild rose
 - */** *Rosa blanda*smooth wild rose
 - * *Salix humilis*.....prairie willow
 - * ***Symphoricarpos occidentalis***wolfberry
- * = Available from Out Back Nursery // ** = Available from Prairie Moon Nursery
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Mesic / Common Ornamentals

- * ***Amelanchier* spp.** (*A. alnifolia*, *A. sanguinea*, *A. spicata*)
Saskatoon, low, and spicate serviceberries
- Aronia melanocarpa***.....chokeberry
- ** ***Cornus alternifolia***.....alternate-leaved or pagoda dogwood grows to 32', shade
- * *Cornus racemosa*gray dogwood
- */** ***Hypericum prolificum***shrubby St.-John's wort
- */** ***Physocarpus opulifolius***.....ninebark
- * *Rubus allegheniensis*highbush blackberry
- * *Rubus idaeus* var. *strigosus*.....wild red raspberry
- */** ***Symphoricarpos albus***.....snowberry
- Viburnum edule*squashberry
- */** ***Viburnum opulus* var. *americanum*** (*Viburnum trilobum*)
American highbush cranberry §

Shade-Loving

- Carpinus caroliniana*.....blue beech, musclewood small tree to 32'
- Linnaea borealis*twinlineer light or shade,
upland or lowland
- Lonicera canadensis***.....fly honeysuckle
- */** *Sambucus racemosa*red-berried elder
- */** *Staphylea trifolia*bladdernut
- Viburnum lentago***.....nannyberry
- Viburnum rafinesquianum***.....downy arrowwood

Ericaceous Shrubs / Acidic Soils – upland:

- * *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* bearberry dwarf shrub (< 1')
- Chimaphila pipsissewa* prince's pine, pipsissewa dwarf shrub (< 1')
- Comptonia peregrina* sweet fern +
- Epigaea repens* trailing arbutus dwarf shrub (< 1')
- * *Gaultheria procumbens* wintergreen dwarf shrub (< 1')
- Prunus susquehanae* Appalachian dwarf shrub cherry +
- Vaccinium angustifolium* sweet lowbush blueberry also lowland, small
- Vaccinium myrtilloides* velvetleaf blueberry also lowland, small

Ericaceous Shrubs / Acidic Soils – lowland:

- Andromeda polifolia* bog rosemary low shrub (< 30")
- Chamaedaphne calyculata* leatherleaf
- Kalmia polifolia* bog laurel dwarf shrub (< 30")
- * *Rhododendron groenlandicum* Labrador-tea
- Vaccinium macrocarpon* big cranberry dwarf shrub (< 1')
- Vaccinium oxycoccos* small cranberry dwarf shrub (< 1')
- Vaccinium vitis-idaea* mountain cranberry, lingonberry low shrub (< 30")

+ not in Ericaceae family but similar habitat/soils § easily confused with non-native *V. opulus* var. *opulus*

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(Mesic or) Poor/Rocky Sites

- * *Cornus rugosa* round-leaved dogwood
- * ***Dasiphora fruticosa*** shrubby cinquefoil
- * ***Diervilla lonicera*** bush honeysuckle
- * ***Juniperus communis*** common juniper
- * *Juniperus horizontalis* creeping juniper
- Prunus pumila* sand cherry
- */** ***Rhus aromatica*** fragrant sumac
- Rosa acicularis* prickly wild rose
- Sibbaldia retusa* (*Sibbaldiopsis tridentata*) three-toothed cinquefoil, wineleaf cinquefoil

Vines

- */** *Celastrus scandens* American bittersweet §§§
- Clematis occidentalis* purple clematis
- */** *Clematis virginiana* virgin's bower
- Lonicera dioica* wild honeysuckle
- Lonicera hirsuta* hairy honeysuckle
- Lonicera reticulata* grape honeysuckle
- * *Menispermum canadense* moonseed
- * *Parthenocissus vitacea* woodbine
- * *Vitis riparia* riverbank grape

§§ easily confused with non-native *Celastrus orbiculatus*, oriental bittersweet, which is invasive. Oriental bittersweet has sometimes been sold as the native species even by native plant nurseries.