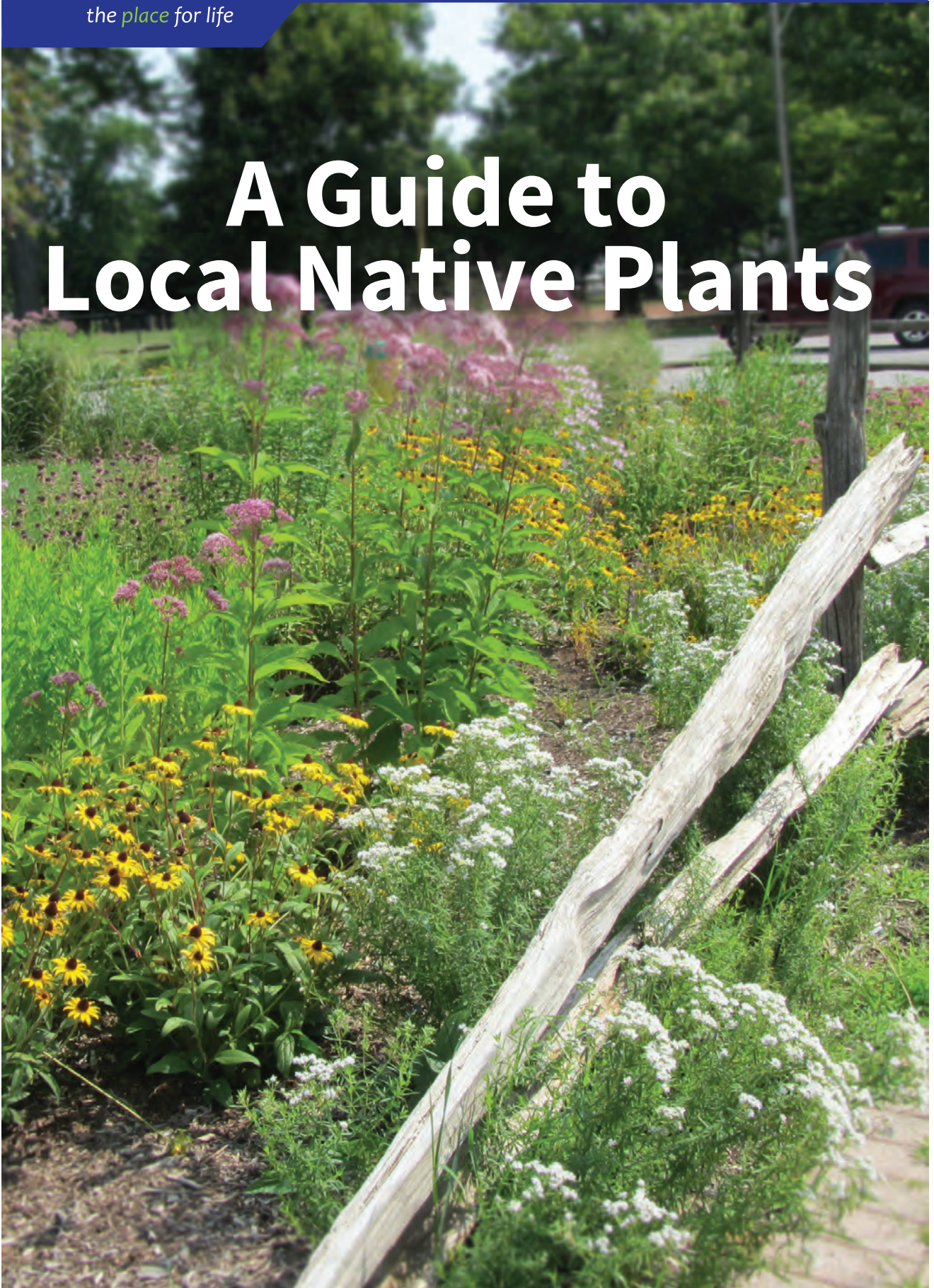




Essex Region Conservation
the *place* for life

A Guide to Local Native Plants



Why Are Native Plants Important?

This guide is an introduction to some of the more common native plants found within Essex County. You will find photos and identification tips to help you identify locally common native plants at all stages of their lifecycles, from newly emerged plant, to flower to seed stage. We have included helpful information on plant height and bloom period to help you plan your garden. You will also find the scientific names listed at the top of each page so that you can be certain you are buying the true native variety of the species from your local nursery, rather than a selectively bred variant.

Native plants are species that have been growing in a region since before European settlement, have evolved with our climate and are well adapted to survive throughout

the year, from intensely hot, dry summer months to cold winter months. There is a huge variety of native plant species to suit any type of conditions. They range from shade tolerant to sun-loving and from drought resistant to species that thrive in wet conditions. Once established, they require less maintenance and watering than non-native ornamental plants. They are long-lived and readily re-seed themselves, coming back year after year.

With a good mix of native species, your garden will have colour throughout the growing season, with species that start blooming in the early spring and others that bloom well into October - attracting pollinators all season long!

Welcome!

ERCA

The Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) was established in 1973 to manage the natural resources of the Essex Region in partnership with our member municipalities and the Province of Ontario. Our nine member municipalities include the City of Windsor, County of Essex and the Township of Pelee Island.

DRCC

The Detroit River Canadian Cleanup (DRCC) is a community-based partnership initiated in 1998 to clean up, enhance, restore and sustain the Detroit River ecosystem. Partnerships within the DRCC aim to promote and implement the Remedial Action Plan to restore the Detroit River's beneficial uses with the ultimate goal of removing the Detroit River from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern.

The DRCC funds community planting projects throughout the Detroit River watershed.

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Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)



BLOOMS July – October

HEIGHT Leaves 1 – 1.5m (3 - 5 ft),
Flowering stalks 1.5 - 3m (6 - 10 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Nesting, seeds and shelter for
songbirds, larval host to two
butterfly species.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Mature stems turns purplish-blue
at the base, young leaves are hairy
where they attach to the stems; seed
heads typically made up of three or
more spikelets and look like a
turkey's foot.

OTHER INFORMATION Drought resistant.

Blackeyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)



BLOOMS June – October

HEIGHT Less than 1 m (2 - 3 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Nectar source for bees, butterflies and other insects; larval host to two butterfly species; winter seed source for birds.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Leaves and stems covered in short bristly-hairs giving it a rough texture; flower is yellow and daisy-like with dark brown center.

OTHER INFORMATION May bloom twice in a season.

Blue flag iris (*Iris versicolor*)



BLOOMS May - July

HEIGHT Less than 1 m (2 – 2.5 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts hummingbirds.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Sword-like leaves; large, delicate looking flowers, violet to deep purple in colour with downward curved petals; seeds develop in three-celled green capsules 3-5 cm in length.

OTHER INFORMATION Very moisture tolerant; grows along stream banks, marshes and swamps, but will grow easily in most gardens.

Blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*)



BLOOMS July - Sept

HEIGHT 0.5 – 2 m (2 – 6 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts a large number of native bee species; larval host to the common buckeye butterfly and verbena moth.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Square, reddish stems; toothed, lance-shaped leaves in pairs on the stems; many branching pencil-like flower spikes, flower from the bottom up with small, five-petaled purple flowers; leaves may be three-lobed at the base of the plant.

OTHER INFORMATION Moisture tolerant.

Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)



BLOOMS July - Oct

HEIGHT 1 – 2 m (4 – 6 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts a large number of native bee species.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Very veiny leaves in pairs that join around the stem; white, flat topped, hairy flower clusters.

OTHER INFORMATION Prefers moist soils and full to partial sun.

Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)



BLOOMS June – September

HEIGHT Less than 1 m (1 – 2.5ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts a variety of milkweed-specific insects and beetles; larval host to three butterflies including monarchs; nectar source for many butterfly species; pollen source for native bees, bumblebees and honeybees.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Lance-shaped leaves alternate on stem; dark green and leathery on top, velvety underneath; flat-topped, bright orange clusters of small, intricate flowers with 5 downward pointed petals and 5 upward facing hoods; seed pods are velvety, smooth and upward pointing.

OTHER INFORMATION Has traditionally had many medicinal uses among Native American tribes.

Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)



BLOOMS June - August

HEIGHT 1 – 2 m (3 – 6 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts a variety of milkweed - specific insects and beetles; larval host to monarch butterflies; nectar source for many butterfly species; pollen source for native bees, bumblebees and honeybees.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Thick, unbranched stem; broad leaves with hairy, silvery undersides; round clusters of light pink to purple flowers; seed pods are velvety, warty and teardrop shaped.

OTHER INFORMATION Monarchs prefer younger growth; look for caterpillars from July – September.

Compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*)



BLOOMS July - September

HEIGHT Leaves to 1 m, flowering stalks to 3 m (3 – 9 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Provides an elevated perch from which insectivorous birds hunt; seeds last into the fall as a food source for birds and small mammals; attracts a variety of native bees and bumblebees.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Coarsely hairy stems and leaves with a sandpaper-like texture; leaves deeply lobed and very distinctive; tall flowering stalks topped with branching clusters of sunflower-like yellow flowers with yellow to brown centers.

OTHER INFORMATION Has a large taproot which can grow down to 5 m underground; has a very long lifespan.

Culver's root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*)



BLOOMS June - Sept

HEIGHT 1 – 2 m (4 - 7 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts butterflies and a variety of native bees and bumblebees.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Finely-tooth leaves arranged in whorls around the stems; branching spikes of tightly clustered, tubular white flowers create a candelabra effect.

OTHER INFORMATION Threatened and endangered in some areas of its range.

Cup plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*)



BLOOMS July - September

HEIGHT 1 – 2.5 m (4 – 8 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts butterflies, bees and hummingbirds; leaves form a cup around the stem that holds water used by birds; seeds eaten by birds in the fall.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Large, dark green, toothed leaves; leaves in pairs that join around the stem to form a cup that holds rainwater; branching clusters of yellow, daisy-like flowers with darker yellow centers.

OTHER INFORMATION Provides nesting materials and/or structure for native bee species.

Dense blazing star (*Liatris spicata*)



BLOOMS July – September

HEIGHT 0.5 – 1.5 m (2 – 5 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts butterflies, hummingbirds and a variety of native bees and bumblebees.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Grass-like leaves circling the stem, becoming less dense towards the top; tall spike of densely clustered flower heads that bloom as a tuft from the top down.

OTHER INFORMATION Protected under the Species at Risk Act in Ontario.

Eastern prickly pear cactus

(*Opuntia humifusa*)



BLOOMS June – August

HEIGHT Less than 0.5 m (0.5 – 1 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts a large number of native bee species.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Low growing cactus with beaver tail shaped pads bearing clusters of reddish-brown barbs; flower is yellow, often with reddish middle.

OTHER INFORMATION Only grows in Ontario within Canada.

Foxglove beardtongue

(*Penstemon digitalis*)



BLOOMS May - July

HEIGHT 1 – 1.5 m (3 - 5 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts hummingbirds, bees and bumblebees.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Dark green, waxy leaves in pairs up the stem; basal leaves, first to sprout in spring, are rounded to oval shaped; reddish-brown stems; clusters of paired, tubular, white flowers approximately 2.5 cm long.

OTHER INFORMATION Can tolerate dry, part shade conditions.

Golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*)



BLOOMS April - June

HEIGHT Up to 1 m (1 – 3 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Because of their small size, the flowers are an important nectar source for insects with short mouthparts. Larval host to black swallowtail butterflies.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Leaves divided into threes with toothed edges; flowering stalks are sparsely leafed and topped with a spreading umbrella of tiny yellow flowers in flat-topped clusters.

OTHER INFORMATION Seeds and stems turn purple as they ripen moving into the fall.

Great blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)



BLOOMS July - September

HEIGHT Less than 1 m (2 - 3 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts hummingbirds and a variety of native bees and bumblebees.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Toothed leaves alternate around the stem, narrowing to the stem and growing smaller up the unbranched stalk; tubular violet flowers, clustered close to the stem with two petals on top and three on the bottom.

OTHER INFORMATION Prefers average to moist conditions, not drought tolerant.

Grey headed coneflower

(*Ratibida pinnata*)



BLOOMS July - August

HEIGHT 1 – 1.5 m (3 - 5 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts birds and butterflies and a high number of native bees; seeds are a late season food source for birds.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Compound leaves with five to seven lance-shaped lobes; each flower on its own stalk; five to eight drooping yellow petals surround a cone-shaped center that starts grey-green and turns brown as it matures.

OTHER INFORMATION Also known as yellow coneflower.

Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*)



BLOOMS August - September

HEIGHT 1 – 2 m (4 – 7 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Larval host to the pepper and salt skipper butterfly; nesting material and seed source for a variety of birds; nesting material for bees.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Leaves narrow at the base, up to 60 cm long; leaf travels straight up the stem at its attachment point before growing outwards; single, large, fluffy seed head is golden brown.

OTHER INFORMATION One of four major tallgrass prairie species including: little bluestem, big bluestem, and switch grass.

Ironweed (*Vernonia missurica*)



BLOOMS August - October

HEIGHT 1 – 2 m (4 – 6 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts a high number of native bees species.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Leaves with serrated edges, up to 20 cm long; unbranched stalks except for flowering head; flowering head made up of tightly packed clusters of pinkish-purple tubular flowers, each with a curved style sticking out.

OTHER INFORMATION Gets its name for its very strong stems that make the plant wind resistant.

Lanceleaf coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*)



BLOOMS May - August

HEIGHT Less than 1 m (1 - 2 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts a high number of native bee species as well as butterflies.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS 7 – 10 cm (3 – 4 inch) oval leaves paired on the stem; 2.5 – 5 cm (1-2 inch) yellow flowers with yellow centers; petals are 4-lobed.

OTHER INFORMATION Spreads by its roots and can grow into large colonies. Can be dead-headed to extend blooming through the summer months.

New England aster

(Symphyotrichum novae-angliae)



BLOOMS August - October

HEIGHT 1 – 2 m (3 – 6 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts a high number of native bees, bumblebees and honey bees, as well as butterflies; larval host for the pearl crescent and checkerspot butterflies.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Alternate, clasping leaves that wrap partially around the stem; large clusters of purple flowers with narrow petals and yellow centers.

OTHER INFORMATION Important late-season nectar source for pollinators, especially monarch butterflies.

Obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana*)



BLOOMS June - September

HEIGHT 1 – 1.5 m (3 - 4 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Square stems with paired, finely-toothed leaves; leaves are waxy in appearance; stems terminate in a spike that bears flowers on four sides; flowers are tubular and pale purple to white in colour with two lobes on the top and three on the bottom.

OTHER INFORMATION If the flowers are bent, they tend to stay in their new position, giving the plant its name. Spreads easily by its roots and is deer resistant.

Ohio spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohioensis*)



BLOOMS April - July

HEIGHT Up to 1 m (2 - 3 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts a high number of native bees and bumblebees.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Long grass-like leaves and smooth stems, terminating in small, flowering clusters; leaves alternate on the stem from up to 8 attachment points; dark purple to blue flowers with three petals.

OTHER INFORMATION Flowers open in the early morning and shrivel under intense midday heat.

Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)



BLOOMS June - October

HEIGHT 0.5 – 1.5 m (2 - 5 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies as well as high numbers of native bee species.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Rough, paired leaves; tall, smooth stems topped with single, pinkish-purple flowers with drooping petals which surround a spiky, dark brown central disk.

OTHER INFORMATION Is a mild, natural antibiotic.

Spotted Joe-Pye weed

(*Eupatorium maculatum*)



BLOOMS July - September

HEIGHT Up to 1.5 m (4 – 5 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE An important source of nectar, it is highly attractive to butterflies and pollinators.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Purple or purple spotted stems; long leaves up to 25 cm (10 inches), heavily veined and whorled around the stem in groups of 3 or more; stems topped with flat-topped clusters of fuzzy pink blooms.

OTHER INFORMATION Takes its name from a folklore tale of an Indian named Joe Pye who cured an outbreak of typhus using the plant.

Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)



BLOOMS June – August

HEIGHT Up to 1.5 m (4 – 5 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Larval host to monarch and queen butterflies; flowers attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Paired, lance-shaped leaves; branching stems; flat-topped clusters with numerous, deep pink flowers; seed pods are smooth and upward pointing.

OTHER INFORMATION The downy fuzz that each milkweed seed is attached to is so buoyant it was used for stuffing life jackets during WWII.

Switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*)



BLOOMS August - October

HEIGHT 1 – 2 m (3 – 6 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Larval host for numerous skipper and satyr butterflies. Nesting material and cover for songbirds, pheasant and quail. Important seed source for birds.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Clumped grass with round, reddish stems. Large, open seed head, with purplish tint.

OTHER INFORMATION One of four major tallgrass prairie species including: little bluestem, big bluestem, and switch grass.

Tall coreopsis (*Coreopsis tripteris*)



BLOOMS July - October

HEIGHT 1 – 2.5 m (3 – 8 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts high numbers of native bee species, also attractive to birds and butterflies.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Leaves have three lance-shaped segments; single stalks grow very tall and are topped with branched stems each bearing a single, yellow daisy-like flower with a brown center.

OTHER INFORMATION Wind resistant.

Virginia mountain mint

(*Pycnanthemum virginianum*)



BLOOMS July - September

HEIGHT Up to 1 m (2 - 3 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Valuable to native bees, bumblebees and honey bees.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Short and bushy in appearance due to the many small pointed leaves; stems branch at the tops into flowering clusters; small white flowers, often spotted with purple, bloom a few at a time; leaves have a strong minty scent when crushed.

OTHER INFORMATION Is particularly attractive to the great black wasp, which will help control pest grasshoppers.

Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)



BLOOMS July - August

HEIGHT 05. – 1 .5 m (2 - 4 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Attracts a wide variety of native bees, bumblebees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Paired leaves are greyish-green and toothed; strongly aromatic and minty; square, reddish stems; shaggy, tubular flowers vary from deep purple to pale lavender in colour, variously described as resembling a pom-pom or a firework.

OTHER INFORMATION Has been used by Native Americans to treat a wide array of medical concerns including respiratory ailments, colic, fever, coughs and acne.

Wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)



BLOOMS April - July

HEIGHT Height: Up to 1 m (2 - 3 ft)

WILDLIFE VALUE Flowers attract hummingbirds, bees, butterflies and hawk moths; seeds are eaten by finches and buntings.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Distinctive leaves divided into three sections with rounded lobes on each; tall, slender stems carry ornate, nodding flowers; flowers are red on the outside and yellow within, with yellow stamens hanging below the bloom and pointed spurs pointed upwards.

OTHER INFORMATION Prefers partial shade. The leaves will stay evergreen up to -23°C (-10°F). Readily hybridizes with other varieties of columbine, must be grown alone to maintain genetic identity especially if blooms are deadheaded.

Wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)



BLOOMS April - June

HEIGHT Up to 0.5 m

WILDLIFE VALUE Seeds are attractive to birds.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS Distinctive leaves with five deep divisions; flowers are pink to purple with five petals and open flat.

OTHER INFORMATION Prefers shady conditions, is a common, early-blooming woodland wildflower.

Humans depend on pollinators to help in the production of approximately 30% of our food crops, including things like apples, coffee and chocolate. We often think of honey bees when we think of pollinators, but there are hundreds of wild species of pollinators including bees, bumblebees, butterflies, moths, flies and beetles. Many of these species rely exclusively on native plants as host plants for their young, shelter from predators and for nesting materials. We can all do our part to support pollinators such as the monarch by incorporating native plants into our landscapes.

Thank you to our Supporters!



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