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## GO NATIVE IN YOUR GARDEN

### *And Let Mother Nature Do the Work*

Long before cultivated gardens existed native plants ruled.

Mother Nature designed these plants to thrive in specific places in the wild. From shady forests and wetlands to sunny fields, deserts and mountains, native plants have adapted over thousands of years to regional soils, weather and pests.



“Natives should rule the garden,” says Dr. Allan Armitage, world renowned breeder and author of *Native Plants for North America*. “You pick the right plant for the right spot, and it will thrive for years with little to no care – and with a positive impact on the environment.”

According to Armitage, native plants are perfect for low maintenance, environmentally minded gardens. After the first year, native plants give more reward with less work for the homeowner. You don’t need to water, fertilize or spray with harmful herbicides or pesticides to obtain a beautiful garden.

Mother Nature will show her gratitude for providing food, shelter and important breeding areas for birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife.

### **Create a “Backyard Habitat!”**

“Folks used to equate native plants with out-of-control wildflower meadows,” says Armitage. “But with careful breeding, today’s ‘nativars’ are well-breed cultivars that make great garden plants either as a stand alone specimen or a sweep of perennials.”

For those who don’t know a Heuchera from a Zinnia, it’s now easy to create low maintenance backyard habitats that are attractive, fun and involve the whole family.

The best place to start is the National Wildlife Federation ([www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org)) and their partners American Beauties Native Plants® ([www.abnativeplants.com](http://www.abnativeplants.com)). These wildlife and native plant experts have teamed up to create four ‘themed gardens’ guaranteed to bring life to your landscape by providing food and habitat for a variety of ‘desirable’ critters.

“Each plan is simple and takes the guesswork out of native plant gardening with shrubs, trees, vines, ornamental grasses and perennials that are beautiful and great for wildlife,” says Steve Castorani, with American Beauties. “And you don’t have to be an expert ‘naturalist’ to create a thriving, artistic landscape or your own private retreat!”

For great plans to inspire your creativity and a list of native plants that will grow best in your area check out their suggested theme gardens: The *Bird Garden*, *Butterfly Garden*, *Shade Garden* and *Rain Garden*.

## Attract Butterflies and Bees

Bees and butterflies are the pollinators for our ecosystem. Butterflies are lovely additions to any garden. Just ask David Mizejewski, naturalist for the National Wildlife Foundation.

“Over 4,000 bee species are native to North America and are critical pollinators in the wild for vegetables and ornamentals,” he says. “You want to attract these beneficial insects to your garden.”



An exciting new plant introduction, *Veronia lettermannii* 'Iron Butterfly', developed by Dr. Armitage, attracts many pollinators from the Northeast to the Midwest, including the prized Monarch butterfly. Fabulous long spikes of deep purple flowers bloom from late summer into fall.

The rose-pink swamp milkweed, *Asclepias incarnata*, is another butterfly and hummingbird magnet, and they're deer-proof too!

You can draw butterflies, particularly the elusive Dusky Wing Butterfly, and bees in early summer with the 2010 Perennial Plant Association's "Plant of the Year" -- *Baptisia australis*, or 'Wild Indigo.' It's easy to grow, hardy and drought-tolerant with sturdy, upright stems covered with elegant purple-blue flowers, making it a great cut flower.

## For the Birds

“Feeders attract specific birds; however, a garden planted with the needs of birds in mind will attract dozens of species to your yard. Many birds eat seeds but others eat berries, fruits, or nectar and they all feed on insects. Birds and small critters need places to build nests and find shelter from weather and predators,” says Mizejewski. “So why not plant food and shelter for the birds?”

Shrubs like the American Cranberry Viburnum and *Ilex verticillata* 'Winterberry' are covered in colorful berries in winter, supplying food for wildlife and beauty for your landscape. Hummingbirds love the tube-shaped deep red flowers of our native Trumpet Honeysuckle, *Lonicera sempervirens*. Slender, twining stems provide cover for birds while the late summer red berries are eaten by a wide variety of birds.

Love evergreens? The dusty blue native, Eastern Red Cedar or *Juniperus virginiana* is adored by over 80 species of birds for its grey-blue berries and dense cover.

## Right Plant for the Right Spot

Dry, shady garden conditions can be a challenge. Tough spots call for tough plants; *Heuchera* is a genus that thrives even in the most undesirable garden conditions. There are a large assortment of *Heucheras* to experiment with, some spring blooming, some with bright chartreuse leaves and many with eye catching variegated foliage. *Heuchera villosa* 'Bronze Wave' blooms in early autumn, delicate white flowers hover over the almost lacquered looking bronze to red brown foliage.

Woodland Aster is a great drought tolerant groundcover that grows well in shady and sunny areas alike. Scores of butterflies and pollinators are attracted to clouds of white blooms come autumn. Songbirds appreciate its seed set as well.

You can find American Beauties Native Plants® in distinctive pots with fact-filled tags at your local garden center. For more information visit [www.abnativeplants.com](http://www.abnativeplants.com) and [www.nwf.org/backyard/](http://www.nwf.org/backyard/)

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*American Beauties Native Plants® and the National Wildlife Federation have teamed up to benefit educational programs to protect wildlife for our children's future. A portion of each sale of American Beauties native plants is donated to the NWF. American Beauties provided hundreds of native plants for the mall in Washington, D.C., listed as the 100,000<sup>th</sup> "Certified Wildlife Habitat" by National Wildlife Federation. NWF will recognize your commitment to wildlife conservation and the environment with the "Certified Wildlife Habitat" certificate and sign that you can proudly display in your landscape.*