A selection of

Native Plants
for your garden

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) would like to thank the following for their assistance in the creation of this resource:

North American Native Plant Society*
www.nanps.org

Wildflower Farm*
www.wildflowerfarm.com

Grow-Wild*
www.grow-wild.com

Lorraine Johnson,
gardening and environmental author

Additonal native plant gardening information can be found on these websites:

TRCA Healthy Yards - www.trca.ca/yards

Canadian Wildlife Federation
www.wildaboutgardening.org

LEAF - www.yourleaf.org

**sources of plants as well as information*

The soil and climate of a region in large part dictate the plants and animals that exist there. These species are referred to as native. The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is no exception. This small patch of earth has its own collection of native species that have evolved together over thousands of years. Despite their beauty and practicality, the region's native plants remain a mystery to many residents and are underrepresented in their gardens.

Through public education and support for native plant propagation, TRCA and partners are turning the tide. This guide is one of many Healthy Yards resources designed to assist gardeners with the creation of beautiful landscapes that reflect the region's natural heritage, and contribute to a healthy community.

100% POST-CONSUMER FIBRES

black-eyed Susan

(Rudbeckia hirta)

black-eyed Susan

(Rudbeckia hirta)

exposure: full sun to part shade

soil: sand, loam or clay; dry to average; well-drained

height: 30 – 90 cm (1 – 3 ft)

flower: prolific, long-lasting, yellow flowers in summer

natural habitat: dry meadows, prairies and open woods

wildlife value: nectar source for bees and butterflies; caterpillar host

additional info: adaptable, hardy and drought-tolerant; good choice for infertile soil; plant in mass for brilliant blast of late-summer colour; makes great cut flowers

bottlebrush grass

(Elymus hystrix)

bottlebrush grass

(Elymus hystrix)

exposure: part shade to full shade

soil: sand, loam or rocky; dry to average; well-drained

height: 60 cm – 1.5 m (2 – 5 ft)

natural habitat: open woods and clearings

wildlife value: attracts birds and butterflies; butterfly larval host

additional info: clump-forming grass tolerates a range of conditions including dry shade and sun with adequate moisture; good in mass plantings or interspersed with wildflowers; bristly seed heads resemble a bottle brush

Christmas fern

(Polystichum acrostichoides)

Christmas fern

(Polystichum acrostichoides)

exposure: part shade to full shade

soil: loam; dry to average

height: 30 cm – 75 cm (1– 2.5 ft)

natural habitat: woodlands

wildlife value: butterfly larvae host

additional info: easy-to-grow, even in dry shade; stays green throughout winter; used in Christmas decorations

foxglove beardtongue

(Penstemon digitalis)

foxglove beardtongue

(Penstemon digitalis)

exposure: full sun to part shade

soil: sand or gravel; average to moist

height: 60 – 120 cm (2 – 4 ft)

flower: white or lavender trumpet-shaped blooms in spring and early summer

natural habitat: prairies, meadows and open woods

wildlife value: attracts hummingbirds and butterflies

additional info: tolerates dry shade

heart-leaf foamflower

(Tiarella cordifolia)

heart-leaf foamflower

(Tiarella cordifolia)

exposure: part shade to full shade

soil: loam; average to moist; humus-rich

height: 13 – 25 cm (5 – 10 ft)

flower: small, white, star-like flowers on spikes in spring and early summer

natural habitat: woodlands

additional info: excellent groundcover for woodland and shady rock gardens; spreads by runners; maple-like foliage turns red in the fall and remains throughout winter

hoary vervain

(Verbena stricta)

hoary vervain

(Verbena stricta)

exposure: full sun to part shade

soil: sand or loam; dry to average

height: 60 – 90 cm (2 – 3 ft)

flower: showy blue-purple flower spikes throughout summer

natural habitat: dry prairies and meadows

wildlife value: excellent nectar plant for many butterflies; butterfly larval host

additional info: extremely drought-tolerant; deer-resistant

little bluestem

(Schizachyrium scoparium)

little bluestem

(Schizachyrium scoparium)

exposure: full sun to part shade

soil: sand or loam; dry to medium; well-drained

height: 30 – 90 cm (1 – 3 ft)

natural habitat: dry prairie, savannah and dunes

wildlife value: attracts birds; larval host for skipper butterflies

additional info: extremely drought-tolerant and useful for erosion control; grows in bunches; stunning in mass plantings; orange colour in fall; structural feature in winter

New England aster

(Symphyotrichum novae-angliae)

New England aster

(Symphyotrichum novae-angliae)

exposure: full sun to part shade

soil: sand, loam or clay; average to moist

height: 90 – 180 cm (3 – 6 ft)

flower: deep purple flowers in late summer and fall

natural habitat: meadows, fields and moist prairies

wildlife value: attracts birds; larval host and nectar source for many butterflies

additional info: lower leaves wither early so plant at the back of a garden bed; fast-growing

pearly everlasting

(Anaphalis margaritacea)

pearly everlasting

(Anaphalis margaritacea)

exposure: full sun to part shade

soil: sand; dry; well-drained

height: 30 – 90 cm (1 – 3 ft)

flower: long-lasting, small, white flowers in summer

natural habitat: dry meadows, open thickets and forest openings

wildlife value: attracts butterflies; larval host for American painted lady butterfly

additional info: tolerant of dry conditions and infertile soil; grey woolly foliage; used in dried flower arrangements

prairie smoke

(Geum triflorum)

prairie smoke

(Geum triflorum)

exposure: full sun and part shade

soil: sand and loam; dry to average; well-drained

height: 15 – 40 cm (6 – 16 in)

flower: pink blooms in spring

natural habitat: limestone alvars and prairies

wildlife value: attracts butterflies

additional info: unique groundcover for a sunny and dry garden; distinctive plumes of feathery, silver-pink seed heads; foliage remains attractive throughout the season

starry false
Solomon's seal
(Maianthemum stellatum)

starry false Solomon's seal

(Maianthemum stellatum)

exposure: full sun to full shade

soil: loam; average to moist

height: 30 – 60 cm (1 – 2 ft)

flower: white spikes in late spring

natural habitat: moist woods and streambanks

wildlife value: attracts butterflies and pollinating insects

additional info: tolerates dry shade

white wood aster

(Eurybia divariacata)

white wood aster

(Eurybia divariacata)

exposure: part shade to full shade

soil: dry to average

height: 30 – 90 cm (1 – 3 ft)

flower: masses of long-lasting, small, white flowers in late summer and fall

natural habitat: dry woods and clearings

wildlife value: attracts butterflies

additional info: good choice for dry shade; vigorous spreader

wild bergamot

(Monarda fistulosa)

wild bergamot

(Monarda fistulosa)

exposure: full sun to part shade

soil: sand, loam or clay; dry to average

height: 60 – 120 cm (2 – 4 ft)

flower: abundant, violet, jester-hat-shaped flowers in late spring and summer

natural habitat: prairies, old fields and thickets

wildlife value: attracts hummingbirds, butterflies and bees

additional info: easy-to-grow and drought-tolerant; spreads quickly from rhizomes to form attractive clumps; leaves smell like Early Grey tea

wild columbine

(Aquilegia canadensis)

wild columbine

(Aquilegia canadensis)

exposure: full sun to part shade

soil: sand, loam or clay; dry to average; well-drained

height: 30 – 90 cm (1 – 3 ft)

flower: showy, red-and-yellow, tubular flowers in late spring and early summer

natural habitat: rocky woods and woodland edges

wildlife value: attracts butterflies, moths and hummingbirds

additional info: good choice for dry shade; drought-tolerant; readily self-seeds and spreads

wild geranium

(Geranium maculatum)

wild geranium

(Geranium maculatum)

exposure: part sun to part shade

soil: sand or loam; dry to average

height: 30 – 60 cm (1 – 2 ft)

flower: pink or magenta blooms in late spring and early summer

natural habitat: deciduous woodlands

wildlife value: nectar source for hummingbirds and butterflies

additional info: good choice for a woodland garden; also grows in sun in medium-moist soil; looks great in mass and with Jacob's ladder

wild ginger

(Asarum canadense)

wild ginger

(Asarum canadense)

exposure: part shade to full shade

soil: loam; average to moist; humus-rich

height: 15 – 20 cm (6 – 8 in)

flower: single maroon flower under leaves in late spring

natural habitat: rich woodlands

wildlife value: attracts butterflies and pollinating insects

additional info: spreads slowly by rhizomes to form attractive groundcover in shade; drought-tolerant once established; deer-resistant

wild strawberry

(Fragaria virginiana)

wild strawberry

(Fragaria virginiana)

exposure: part sun to full sun

soil: sand, loam or clay; dry to average

height: 15 cm (6 in)

flower: small white flowers in late spring

natural habitat: prairies and open woodlands

wildlife value: attracts butterflies, including the grey hairstreak

additional info: good groundcover for a sunny garden; spreads by runners and forms colonies; drought-tolerant; edible berries in summer; very similar to the woodland strawberry

woodland strawberry

(Fragaria vesca)

woodland strawberry

(Fragaria vesca)

exposure: part shade to full shade

soil: dry to moist

height: 7.5 – 15 cm (3.5 – 6 in)

flower: small white flowers in spring

natural habitat: dry to moist open woods, streambanks and meadows

wildlife value: food for mammals, birds and insects

additional info: good groundcover for a shady garden; spreads by runners; edible red berries in summer; very similar to the wild strawberry

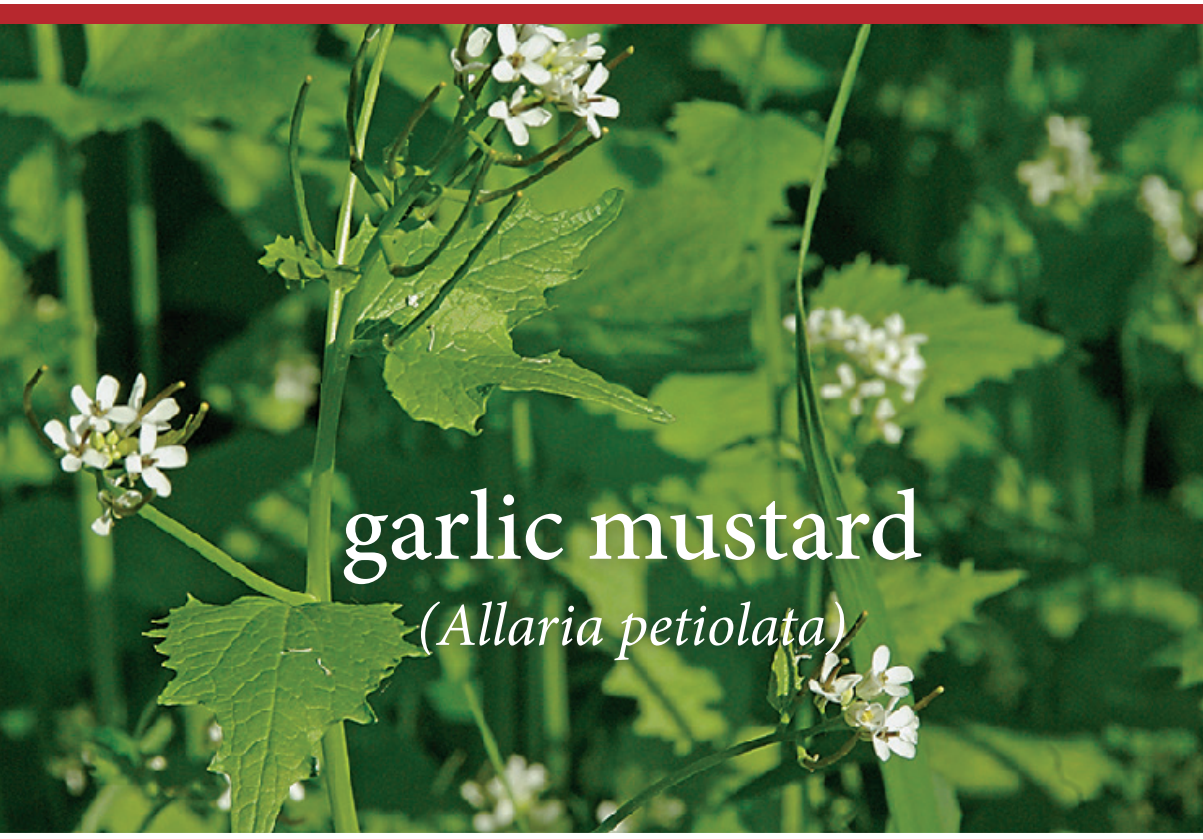
Garden Invaders

Non-native species are considered invasive if they aggressively out-compete native species in natural areas. Seeds from these prolific plants can be transferred to gardens by wind, wildlife, pets or human activity. Visit these websites to familiarize yourself with invasive species:

ontarioinvasiveplants.ca
invadingspecies.com

Two of the most common garden invaders are garlic mustard and dog-strangling vine. Save time and aggravation by removing these plants as soon as they appear. Make sure you remove the entire plant with all the roots before it sets seed. You may need to do this for several years before the seed bank in the soil is depleted.

Invasive Species



garlic mustard

(Allaria petiolata)

dog-strangling vine

(Chanchum rossicum)

Groundcovers Gone Wild

Some common groundcovers spread rapidly throughout gardens and into adjacent natural areas, out-competing native plants and reducing biodiversity. Goutweed, periwinkle and Lily of the valley are three such species. Choose non-invasive alternatives instead, including the native species featured in this guide.

If you already have invasive groundcovers, limit their spread by bordering gardens and pulling out "escapees".

In addition, avoid "meadow in a can" mixes as they often contain self-seeding non-natives, such as Queen Anne's lace and dame's rocket.

Invasive Species

Photography © 2009 Credit Valley Conservation

goutweed

(Aegopodium podegraria)

Invasive Species

Lily of the valley

(Convallaria Majalis)

Invasive Species

periwinkle

(Vinca minor)

NATIVE SPECIES

black-eyed Susan
bottlebrush grass
Christmas fern
foxglove beardtongue
heart-leaf foamflower
hoary vervain
little bluestem
New England aster
pearly everlasting
prairie smoke
starry false Solomon's seal
white wood aster
wild bergamot
wild columbine
wild geranium
wild ginger
wild strawberry
woodland strawberry

INVASIVE SPECIES

garlic mustard
dog-strangling vine
goutweed
Lily of the valley
periwinkle

© Photos by Andrew Leyerle and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority