

Guide to MS4

Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System

October 2023 Edition



Dwarf Crested Iris

Fall Native Plantings

Fall is the perfect time to do some work in the yard and add native plantings to your landscaping.

Native plants not only can create a low maintenance landscape but they also add to the local diversity of animals, plants, and insects. Whether your entire yard is planted with natives or you choose to transform that small section along the house that you can't seem to get anything to grow, native plants will help establish a landscape that you can be proud of for the future. What makes a plant a native? A native plant is a plant that grew in Pennsylvania before the European settlers arrived. Recent research has shown that 90% of our insects feed on three or less types of plants. Over three quarters of the staple crops that feed humans require pollination. There are more than 437 bee species in Pennsylvania, the number one pollinator in the world. Whether you want deer resistant, drought resistant, or pollinator friendly there is a native plant species that will work for your landscape.

Why choose natives?

Choosing a native plant for your landscaping can have a multitude of positive advantages. Native plants can resist the varying temperature changes and weather phenomena's that occur in the four seasons of Pennsylvania. The dry weather in April and May of 2023 did not phase the native plants in Lower Allen Township. This also allows natives to be watered less often than a non-native plant. If you are unsure of this fact, check out the Sheepford Basin along Lisburn Road. Native plants also contribute to the diversity of the native insects allowing for increased pollinators which directly affect our food chain.

Butterfly weed or bush?

The most common pollinator enjoyed by gardeners and non-gardeners alike has to be the butterfly. Both the butterfly bush and the butterfly weed attract pollinators. Butterfly bush is an invasive species while the butterfly weed is a native species. The butterfly bush tends to self-seed, making it noxious while the butterfly weed is not a weed at all and is closely related to the common milkweed, a native plant that attracts the Monarch butterflies. Butterfly weeds are cold-hardy plants and grows to 1-2 feet tall while the butterfly bush can grow to 5-8 feet tall or taller.



butterfly weed

How to Choose Natives?

Knowing your planting zone is the first step in choosing the correct native plant for your location. In central Pennsylvania, most of us are in zone 6b. Your soil content can also help choose the native plant for your landscape. Be sure you are choosing native by shopping with a well informed distributor of plants. DCNR is an excellent source to find native plant locations as well as Penn State Extension Offices Master Gardeners. Consider finding a local native plant sale in your area.