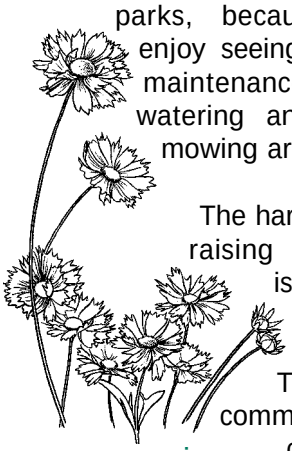
PRIVATE LAND PARTNERSHIPS
WORKING TOGETHER FOR WILDLIFE

WILDFLOWERS

What better way to create beauty and wildlife habitat, along with contributing to Michigan's natural heritage, than by planting native wildflowers on your property? Once established, wildflowers enhance the attractiveness of your landscape, help control erosion, furnish food and cover for wildlife, and provide maximum enjoyment with minimal care. An increasing number of property owners are converting all or portions of their large, high-maintenance lawns to plantings of wildflowers. Wildflowers can be established either from seed in larger areas or from plants in smaller gardens. After the initial cost of establishment, these plantings will save you money and time as you will not have to fertilize, mow, and rake that portion of your lawn. Also, they help to increase the value of your land. Wildflower stands are also showing up in increasing numbers on public property, such as highway rights-of-way, corporate parks, and various recreational parks, because people enjoy seeing them and maintenance costs of watering and frequent mowing are reduced.


coreopsis

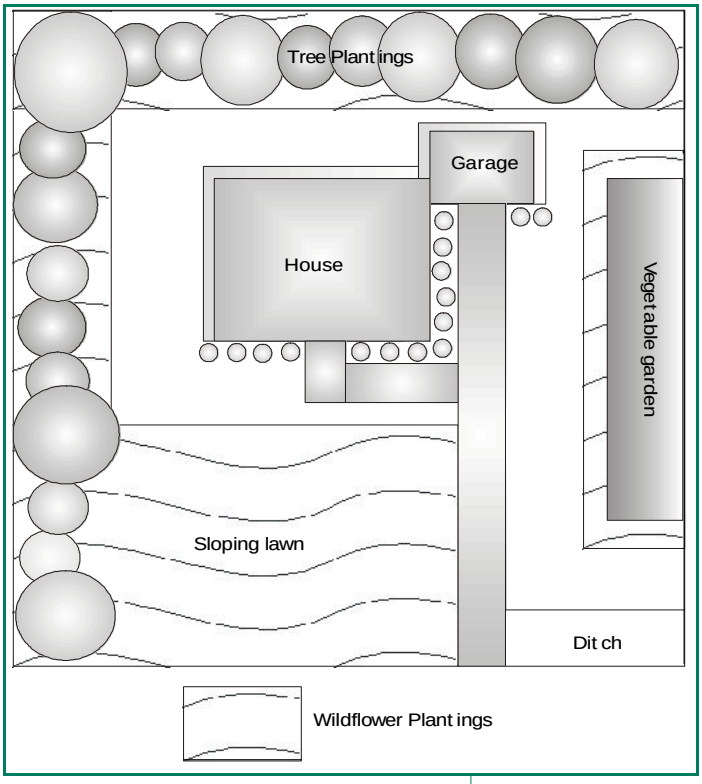
The hardest part of raising wildflowers is successfully establishing them. There is a common misconception that wildflowers are easily grown from seed. On the contrary, all wildflowers require specific soil and temperature conditions, a considerable amount of early attention, and most of all patience. When converting grass to wildflowers, you may have to till sod or perhaps, in the case of a well-established lawn, remove it. Under ideal conditions, most native wildflower plantings take at least two years to be fully developed. Therefore, you should not expect to see blooms the first year, or even the second year with some species. Most plantings take three to five years to become established firmly enough to reduce weedy competition. But the reward is well worth the work and the wait.

Expect to see lots of butterflies, moths, bees, and hummingbirds in the summer and many songbirds , such as golfinches, in the fall. Enjoy the panorama of color in spring, summer, and fall that you created through careful planning. You can do this as you take a well-deserved break from your previously manicured lawn maintenance.

Where to Plant

Wildflower plantings can be as small as a few square feet of border around the vegetable garden or as large as several acres. You may want to consider locations that are difficult to mow on a regular basis, such as ditches, around trees, near woodlots, or in wet areas. Because a wildflower stand does not require the same intensive maintenance as a lawn, you may want to plant anywhere you are simply tired of mowing. For best results, choose an area that is well-drained and that has a limited population of weeds. Weed seeds lie in undisturbed soil, and you should expect some weeds to germinate whenever the soil is disturbed. If the area you have chosen is void of plants, chances are it won't grow wildflowers either. Be sure to pick a location that you can water if rainfall is inadequate during germination and establishment. The size of the wildflower planting should only be a major concern when time and expense are large factors. Whether or not you have a large area or one or more small scattered areas, you can bring color, diversity, and wildlife to your backyard.

All plants have certain requirements for sunlight, moisture, and nutrients. Some species require a great deal of sunshine, at least eight hours per day, while many other species will tolerate partial shade. Be aware that sun-loving plants placed in shade will produce spindly plants with very few blooms. Common planting locations include dry areas, moist to wet areas, areas of moderate nutrition and moisture, and in or at the edges of woodlots. However, some wildflowers will not grow well on very compacted, wet clay or extremely droughty, infertile soils. Therefore, it is essential that you determine the drainage and soil type of the area where the wild-



flowers will be planted. A soil survey map can give you that information and should be available at the Conservation District office in your county. This map indicates the soil type and the percent slope of your land, along with detailed explanations. This information is imperative to a successful wildflower planting. If you wish to know the pH of your soil, your county extension office can perform a soil test to measure pH and nutrient levels. In order to receive this information you must remove soil from the area and take it to the extension office for analysis. For more details about how to take a soil sample, refer to the chapter **Knowing Your Soils** in the Habitat Planning section.

What to Plant

Where you decide to plant the wildflowers will determine which species to plant. Michigan has a wide variety of native wildflowers that offer spectacular color and are well-suited to a number of locations.

Wildflowers may be annuals, perennials, or biennials. Annual plants are those that go from seed to flower to seed within a single growing season. Each year roots, stems, and leaves of the plant die and only dormant seeds are left to regenerate the following year, most of which are not successful. Examples of annuals that are beneficial to butterflies, moths, bees, and hummingbirds include marigold, scarlet petunia, tobacco flower, scarlet sage, and zinnia. These are exotic species, but they are not aggressive and do not present threats to the success of native plants. They are good supplements to your perennial garden and as colorful borders. However, you should incorporate only small amounts of them to cut down on annual costs.

Perennials, such as butterfly-weed, tickseed, purple coneflower, and shasta daisy, live for many growing seasons, and keep their roots year-round. When started from seed, perennial wildflowers will not bloom until the second year after planting. After that, they will bloom every year and you will not have to replace them as you do annuals. However, depending on soil and climate conditions, some wildflowers act as annuals or perennials--for example, black-eyed Susan behaves as an annual in Louisiana but in Michigan is a perennial. For best success and greatest benefit, choose perennial wildflowers native to Michigan. If possible, buy seed from plants actually grown in Michigan, and even better, from a local seed source.

In combination with native perennial wildflowers, you may wish to plant native grasses. Common types that should do well on most sites (except in woodlots) are big bluestem, little bluestem, Indiangrass and switchgrass. These are clump grasses that provide open spaces for wildflowers to grow as well as good nesting, rearing, and winter cover for wildlife. In backyard settings they add beauty and diversity, especially in winter. For more information see the chapters on **Warm Season Grasses and Prairie Restoration** in the Grassland Management section.

Biennials need two years to complete their life cycle. First-season growth produces a small rosette of leaves near the soil surface. During the second year the plant grows a stem, flowers, produces seed, and then dies. Biennials include sweet clover, mullein, curly dock, wild mustard (yellow rocket), shepherd's purse, black mustard, foxglove, and the thistles. Many of the species listed here are exotics and may present problems to wildflower plantings for the first couple years. Because they are biennials, they should die off after the first two years and the planted wildflowers will then be able to flourish. However, to ensure success of your wildflowers, you can control them by spot treating with herbicides or cutting them by hand.

The accompanying tables of perennial, native wildflowers should be helpful for choosing the

Wildflowers for Moist to Wet Soils

Common Name	Scientific Name	Color	Sunlight Needs	Height	Blooming Season
Blue Vervain	Verbena hastata	Blue/Purple	f - p	2 - 4 ft.	July-September
Boneset	Eupatorium perfoliatum	White	f - p	3 - 4 ft.	July-August
Cardinal flower	Lobelia cardinalis	Red	f- p	2 - 4 ft.	July-September
Great blue lobelia	Lobelia siphilitica	Blue-Violet	f - p	1 - 4 ft.	August-Sept.
Marsh marigold	Caltha palustris	Yellow	f	1 - 2 ft.	April-June
New England aster	Aster novae-angliae	Rose/Purple	f - p - s	1 - 4 ft.	Sept.-October
Prairie dock	Silphium terebinthinaceum	Yellow	f	2 - 6 ft.	August-September
Spotted Joe-pye-weed	Eupatorium maculatum	Rose	f	2 - 6 ft.	July-September
Swamp milkweed	Asclepias incarnata	Lavender	f	2 - 4 ft.	June-August
Sweet black-eyed Susan	Rudbeckia subtomentosa	Yellow/Brown	f	2 - 4 ft.	July-August
Wild bergamot	Monarda fistulosa	Lavender	f	2 - 3 ft.	June-July
Wild iris	Iris shrevei	Purple	f	2 - 3 ft.	June

f = full sun p = partial sun s = shade

Wildflowers for Dry to Moderate Soils

Common Name	Scientific Name	Color	Sunlight Needs	Height	Blooming Season
Black-eyed Susan	Rudbeckia hirta	Yellow/brown	f - p	1 - 3 ft.	June-August
Butterfly weed	Asclepias tuberosa	Orange	f - p	2 - 3 ft.	July-August
Common milkweed	Asclepias syriaca	Rose-purple	f- p - s	3 - 5 ft.	June-August
Gray-headed coneflower	Ratibida pinnata	Yellow	f	3 - 5 ft.	July-September
Hairy Beardstongue	Penstemon hirsutus	White/lavender	f - p	1 - 2 ft.	May-July
Lance-leaved coreopsis	Coreopsis lanceolata	Yellow	f	1 - 2 ft.	May-August
Leadplant	Amorpha canescens	Violet	f	2 - 4 ft.	June-July
Maximillian sunflower	Helianthus maximilliani	Yellow	f	2 - 5 ft.	August-October
Purple coneflower	Echinacea pupurea	Purple	f - p	2 - 4 ft.	July-August
Rattlesnake master	Eryngium yuccifolium	White	f	3 - 5 ft.	July-September
Rough blazingstar	Liatrus aspera	Purple	f - p	2 - 4 ft.	July-September
Round headed bushclover	Lespedeza capitata	White	f - p	2 - 3 ft.	August-Sept.
Showy goldenrod	Solidago speciosa	Yellow	f	2 - 5 ft.	August-Sept.
Smooth aster	Aster laevis	Lavender	f	2 - 3 ft.	August-Sept.
Stiff goldenrod	Solidago rigida	Yellow	f	2 - 5 ft.	August-Sept.
Western sunflower	Helianthus occidentalis	Yellow	f	1 - 3 ft.	July-August
Wild bergamot	Monarda fistulosa	Pink-lavender	f	2 - 3 ft.	June-July
Wild indigo	Baptisia tinctoria	Yellow	f	1 - 3 ft.	May-Sept.
Wild lupine	Lupinus perennis	Blue/lavender	f - p - s	1 - 2 ft.	June-July
Wild Senna	Cassia hebecarpa	Yellow	f	3 - 5 ft.	July-August

f = full sun p = partial sun s = shade

Wildflowers for Woodlands (shaded sites)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Color	Sunlight Needs	Height	Blooming Season
Common milkweed	Ascelepias syriaca	Rose-purple	f - p - s	3 - 5 ft.	June-August
Dutchman's breeches	Dicentra cucullaria	White	s	5-9 in.	April-May
Hepatica	Hepatica spp.	White, to blue	p - s	4 - 12 in.	March-May
Jack-in-the-pulpit	Arisaema triphyllum	Green-purple	p - s	12 - 2 ft.	April-June
Large-flowered trillium	Trillium grandiflorum	White-pink	p - s	1 ft.	April-June
May-apple	Podophyllum peltatum	White	s	1 ft.	April-June
Meadow-rue	Thalictrum dioicum	White	s	1-2 ft.	April-May
Pale touch-me-not	Impatiens pallida	Yellow	s	3 - 5 ft.	July-October
Spotted touch-me-not	Impatiens biflora or capensis	Orange	p - s	2 - 5 ft.	July-September
Spring beauty	Claytonia virginica	White-pink	p . s	1 ft.	March-May
Solomon's seal	Polygonatum biflorum	Yellow	p - s	1 - 3 ft.	April-June
Squirrel corn	Dicentra canadensis	White	s	6-12 in.	April-May
Turk's-cap lily	Lilium michiganense	Orange	f - p	3 ft.	July-August
Trout lily	Erythronium americanum	Yellow	p - s	4-10 in.	March-May
Violet	Viola spp.	Violet - blue	s	4-6 in.	April-July
Wild bleeding heart	Dicentra eximia	Pink-red	p - s	1 ft.	May-Aug.
Wild columbine	Aquilega canadensis	Red	f - p	1 - 2 ft.	May-June
Wild ginger (low vine)	Asarum canadense	Purple-brown	p - s	1 ft.	March-May
For woodland/grassland edges					
Butterfly weed	Asciepias tuberosa	Orange	f - p	2 - 3 ft.	July-August
False Solomon's seal	Smilacina racemosa	White	p - s	1 - 3 ft.	April-June
Fireweed	Epilobium angustifolium	Pink	f - p	2 - 4 ft.	July-August
Wild bergamot	Monarda fistulosa	Pink-lavender	f	2 - 3 ft.	May-July
Wild columbine	Aquilega canadensis	Red	f - p	1 - 2 ft.	April-July
Wild geranium	Geranium maculatum	Lavender	p - s	1 - 2 ft.	April-May
Wild lupine	Lupinus perennis	Blue/lavender	f - p - s	1 - 2 ft.	June-July
Woodland sunflower	Helianthus divaricatus	Yellow	f - p	2 - 6 ft.	July-September

f = full sun p = partial sun s = shade

best plants for your area. While color and height are important, you should also consider the blooming season. Spread your blooming season throughout the spring, summer, and fall for the butterflies, moths, bees, and hummingbirds that will feed on the pollen and nectar, the birds that will eat the seeds after bloom, and your personal viewing pleasure.

Remember, patience is important as establishing a planting of wildflowers from seed will take three to five years. For small areas you may wish to use plants instead of seeds. You can also fill in the area with a few annual plants until the perennials bloom. Many wildflower suppliers offer annual mixes for this purpose. Check these mixes carefully for weeds that may cause serious problems, such as queen Anne's lace and chickory. However, you should expect a weed problem the first year. Avoid the temptation to pull them because you may damage the fragile wildflower seedlings. For more information refer to the chapter on **Wildflower Planting** in this section.

FOR ADDITIONAL CHAPTERS CONTACT:
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Private Land Partnerships: This partnership was formed between both private and public organizations in order to address private lands wildlife issues. Individuals share resources, information, and expertise. This landowner's guide has been a combined effort between these groups working towards one goal: Natural Resources Education. We hope this manual provides you with the knowledge and the motivation to make positive changes for our environment.

FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE: *CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT*