Myths about Native Plants

Prairie grasses are a fire hazard.
Dry prairie grasses can be ignited. However, alone, they have less potential for igniting structures than dry needles around the base of commonly used foundation plants like yews and junipers.

What about mosquitoes?

Mosquitoes need standing water for at least 10 days to breed. Landscapes with native plants do not necessarily provide standing water for this length of time. In addition, native plants may attract natural predators to mosquitoes and other pests.

"My city doesn't allow plants that tall."
There is a large variety of shorter wildflowers and grasses that would be allowed under such ordinances. Also, many townships allow native plantings installed according to a landscape plan.

"A wildflower's natural habitat must be duplicated for successful establishment."
While a species' natural habitat should be used as a guide, many species are quite adaptable. A species that requires shade can do well in sun if it is grown in good, loamy, well-drained soil. Full sun plants need about six hours of sunlight daily.

What do native plantings look like?

Many people worry that using native plants in their landscape will give a wild, "out of control" look. There are actually many different varieties of native plants with beautiful, showy flowers, as well as many variations of foliage textures and colors. The varying heights of native plants can also be very aesthetically pleasing.

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Michigan Native Plants for landscaping and conservation.

What are native plants?

Native plants are the trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses, ferns and other plants that have evolved in a particular area (such as southwest Michigan) over thousands of years.

The native plants of Michigan have been here since before European settlement and have adapted to Michigan's growing conditions, including temperature, rainfall, winds, soils, slopes and wildfire.

What types of plants are Native to Michigan?

Michigan is home to many types of plants, including flowers, grasses, trees, shrubs and mosses. Some common varieties are Purple Coneflower, Aster, Butterfly weed, Wild Iris, Switch grass, Canada Wild Rye, Big Bluestem, Trillium, Dogwood, Maple, Oak, White Pine, and many more.

You may already be using Native plants in your landscaping!

Benefits to using native plants.

Well Adapted

Native plants are adapted to local conditions, therefore they require little maintenance once established. They typically do not require fertilizers, pesticides, or excess watering. They are also able to withstand the varying amounts of precipitation we typically receive throughout the growing season.

Support Wildlife

Native plants serve can attract many species of song birds, game birds, beneficial insects, butterflies, and mammals. Native Michigan wildlife has evolved along side the plants, depending on them for food and shelter. By planting natives we can increase biodiversity, or the number of species of plants and animals living in a particular area.

Perennial

Most native species are perennial, or self-seeding biennial plants. This means that they will typically re-seed themselves and continue to thrive and multiply with little human intervention. This helps to save costs by eliminating the need to buy new plants each year.

Control Soil Erosion

Many native species are wonderfully adapted at controlling soil erosion. These species posess root systems which extend up to 15 or more feet under ground. This characteristic not only allows the plants to be more successful at searching out water sources, but also allows them to hold soil particles in place, preventing erosion. The deep root structures also filter out pollution as it makes its way through the soil.

Flood Control

Some native species have the capacity to uptake water at rates much higher than traditional turf grasses or bedding plants. This makes them exceptional at reducing flooding and runoff.

Right:
This shows the deep root structures of some native plants. Deeper root systems allot the plants to grab the soil particles and help stop erosion as well as withstand a drought by reaching deeper into groundwater sources. The root zones of many species extend 15 or more feet below the surface, this is about 10 times the depth of typical turf grass.