## Conservation is a process, begun and accomplished one step at a time.

**You can take actions today that are more friendly to the environment than what you did yesterday…**

### Do No Harm

Eliminate the use of harsh chemicals, fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. Remove or destroy invasive plant species.

### Eliminate Waste: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

The world's resources are limited. Minimize waste by using only what you need. Both inside and out, find ways to reuse items instead of dumping them somewhere else as waste. Route rainwater to water-loving plants or store it in rain barrels for future use. Chip and compost decaying plant materials in your own yard.

### Be a Native Wildlife Gardener

Find ways to support the nature around you. Plants provide food and oxygen to the animal life around them; after soil, they are the first level of an entire ecosystem of diverse life forms that make up our planet. Every porch or yard is a patch of that ecosystem. When you create habitat for birds and butterflies, you nurture yourself as well.

### Be a Community Activist and Educator

Find ways to influence the community around you. Volunteer at prairie restoration sites. Influence the landscape design choices of local churches, schools and businesses. Help write local ordinances to support native landscapes and environmental issues. Teach others to understand and value the nature around them. Leadership includes passing the ethic of environmental commitment and responsibility successfully to the next generation.

**The Conservation@Home program provides guidance in your pursuit of an environmentally friendly yard. The program can provide help at many levels including a personal visit to your site!**

Upon qualification, a one-time fee of $50 is requested ($25 for members of Natural Land Institute). You will be given the Conservation@Home yard sign to signify your achievement as well as newsletters, discounts and other information. Visit our website at www.naturalland.org for events, resources and more information.

If you would like to become Conservation@Home certified or have questions, call NLI Staff at 815-964-6666 or email info@naturalland.org.

Partial funding for this program is provided by the Grand Victoria Foundation.

CONSERVATION@HOME®

A Program of Natural Land Institute

NATURAL LAND INSTITUTE

Conserving Land in Northern Illinois

# BRINGING Nature TO YOUR Yard

## A "How-To" Natural Landscaping Guide

Beautiful, deep-rooted native plants provide **habitat** for beneficial wildlife and **cleaner water** through infiltration.

Natural Land Institute
320 South Third Street, Rockford, IL 61104
815-964-6666
www.naturalland.org

# Conservation@Home

## What is Natural Landscaping?

Natural landscaping uses native plants, preferably in combinations that would be found in a natural ecosystem. Native plants eliminate the need for pesticides or herbicides, require little watering beyond the establishment period, and minimal use of noisy or polluting tools or machines.

### The Benefits of a Natural Landscape

- Native plants are beautiful and interesting.
- They attract native insects, butterflies, songbirds, hummingbirds and other native wildlife.
- Reduced use of chemicals means greater health for your family and others living nearby.
- Reduced water use means less water lost to evaporation, less water removed from the water table and less water likely to run off into nearby stormwater drainage systems.
- Less use of maintenance machines means less noise, air pollution, cost and time used.

## How to Use This Planning Guide

On the following pages you will see diagrams that depict a typical yard. Different areas are shaded and marked with a letter. These letters refer to a "strata" that is a height designation in our manual. The front line of plants will be shorter, and get taller farther back in the landscape. The idea is to create interest with color and gradual height changes to create an interesting and appealing planting bed. Within the strata are many choices: different colors, textures and bloom time.

## How to Design a Natural Landscape

### Designing Natural Outdoor Rooms by Functional Strata

A landscape should be designed to fill the needs of the landowner. A main function of the front yard is to focus attention on the front door, to guide people to it and to distract attention from the garage door. Outdoor living spaces can be included in the front yard to allow and encourage the family to spend more time outdoors enjoying nature. Design landscape spaces to be functional, then form that space with native plants of local ecosystems. A plant's height determines what roles it can play functionally, so this design method uses five height strata.

To design your function-based natural landscape, designate areas for dining, relaxing, entertaining, working, reading and other activities that you want to spend more time doing in the outdoors. Then plan pathways between these living spaces, to and from building entrances, to and from driveway and access points from off the property. A patio or deck placed away from the house with a band of plantings between it and the house is more pleasant than one directly adjacent to the house wall. Consider overhead fabric or wooden structures to provide shade in specific areas instead of relying on trees. Provide plenty of outdoor rooms so you can enjoy your natural landscape many times every day! Consider screened rooms for use in mosquito season!

| Ht | Common Name, *Botanical Name* | Conditions & Wildlife |
|---|---|---|
| E | Prairie Dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis* | ☼◊ |
| E | Purple Prairie Clover, *Dalea purpurea* | ☼◊🐿 |
| E | Side Oats Grama, *Bouteloua curtipendula* | ☼◊ |
| E | Solomon's Seal, *Polygonatum biflorum* | ●🐦 |
| E | Spiderwort, *Tradescantia ohiensis* | ☼ |
| E | Starry False Solomon's Seal, *Maianthemum stellatum* | ●☼◊🐿🐦 |
| E | Swamp Milkweed, *Asclepias incarnata* | ☼💧🦋 |
| E | Torrey's Rush, *Juncus torreyi* | ☼💧 |
| E | White Snakeroot, *Eupatorium rugosum* | ●◊🦋 |
| E | White Turtlehead, *Chelone glabra* | ☼💧 |
| E | White Wood Aster, *Eurybia divaricata* | ◊●🦋 |
| E | Wild Columbine, *Aquilegia canadensis* | ◊●🐦 |
| E | Wild Quinine, *Parthenium integrifolium* | ☼ |
| E | Zig-Zag Goldenrod, *Solidago flexicaulis* | ●◊🦋 |
| F | Baneberry, *Actaea pachypoda* | ●🐦 |
| F | Bloodroot, *Sanguinaria canadensis* | ● |
| F | Bottle Gentian, *Gentiana andrewsii* | ☼ |
| F | Buffalo Grass, *Buchloe dactyloides* | ☼◊ |
| F | Celandine Poppy, *Stylophorum diphyllum* | ● |

| Ht | Common Name, *Botanical Name* | Conditions & Wildlife |
|---|---|---|
| F | Common Cinquefoil, *Potentilla simplex* | ☼◊ |
| F | Common Oak (Penn) Sedge, *Carex pensylvanica* | ●◊ |
| F | Cream Wild Indigo, *Baptisia leucophaea* | ☼◊🦋 |
| F | False Solomon's Seal, *Maianthemum racemosum* | ●🐦🐿 |
| F | Foamflower, *Tiarella cordifolia* | ● |
| F | Hairy Wild Petunia, *Ruellia humilis* | ◊☼ |
| F | Marsh Marigold, *Caltha palustris* | ●☼💧🐿 |
| F | Mayapple *Podophyllum peltatum* | ●◊💧🐿 |
| F | Nodding Wild Onion, *Allium cernuum* | ☼◊ |
| F | Plaintain-Leaved Pussytoes, *Artennaria plantaginifolia* | ☼◊ |
| F | Porcupine Sedge, *Carex hystericina* | ☼💧🦋🐦 |
| F | Prairie Smoke, *Geum triflorum* | ☼◊ |
| F | Prairie Sundrops, *Oenothera pilosella* | ☼◊🦋 |
| F | Sweet Grass/Vanilla Grass, *Hierochloe odorata* | ☼💧 |
| F | Trillium, *Trillium spp.* | ● |
| F | Virginia Bluebells, *Mertensia virginiana* | ●🦋 |
| F | Wild Geranium, *Geranium maculatum* | ●◊🦋 |
| F | Wild Ginger, *Asarum canadense* | ●◊ |
| F | Wild Strawberry, *Fragaria virginiana* | ☼◊🦋🐿🐦 |

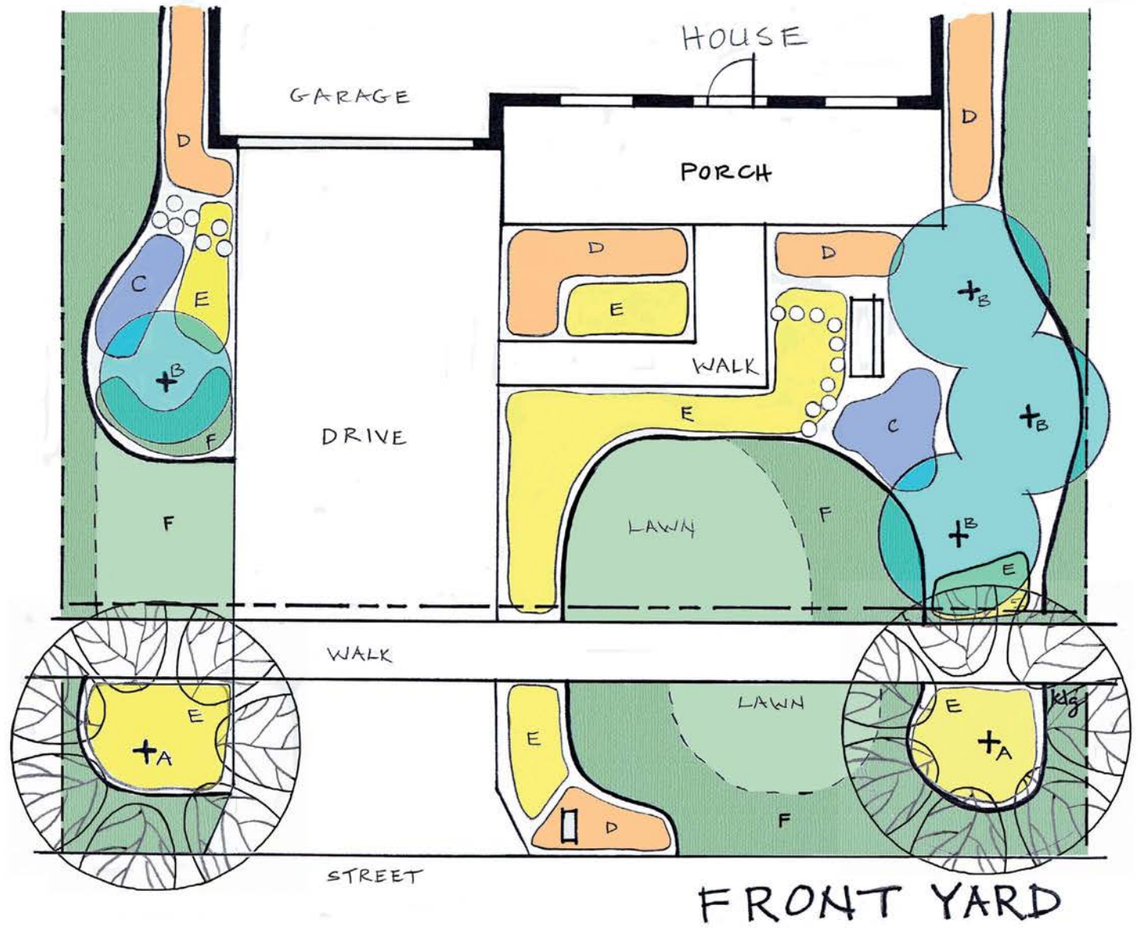
KEY: ☼/● = Sun/Shade 💧/◊ = Wet/Dry 🦋 = Butterflies 🐦 = Birds 🐿 = Wildlife

# Native Plant Lists (continued)

| Ht | Common Name, *Botanical Name* | Conditions & Wildlife |
|---|---|---|
| D | Little Bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium* | |
| D | Maple-Leaved Viburnum, *Viburnum acerifolium* | |
| D | Meadowsweet, *Spiraea alba* | |
| D | New England Aster, *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* | |
| D | Northern Sea Oats, *Chasmanthium latifolium* | |
| D | Obedient Plant, *Physostegia virginiana* | |
| D | Ostrich Fern, *Matteuccia struthiopteris* | |
| D | Prairie Blazingstar, *Liatris pychnostachya* | |
| D | Prairie Dock, *Silphium terebinthinaceum* | |
| D | Queen of the Prairie, *Filipendula rubra* | |
| D | Rattlesnake Master, *Eryngium yuccifolium* | |
| D | Rosinweed, *Silphium integrifolium* | |
| D | Sky Blue Aster, *Symphyotrichum oolentangiense* | |
| D | Smooth Ironweed, *Vernonia fasciculata* | |
| D | Sneezeweed, *Helenium autumnale* | |
| D | Sprite Winterberry, *Ilex verticillata 'Sprite'* | |
| D | Stiff Goldenrod, *Oligoneuron rigidum* | |
| D | Switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum* | |
| D | Tall Coreopsis, *Coreopsis tripteris* | |
| D | Wild Bergamot, *Monarda fistulosa* | |
| D | Yellow Coneflower, *Ratibida pinnata* | |

| Ht | Common Name, *Botanical Name* | Conditions & Wildlife |
|---|---|---|
| E | Blue Cohosh, *Caulophyllum thalictroides* | |
| E | Blue Flag Iris, *Iris virginica var. shrevei* | |
| E | Brown Fox Sedge, *Carex vulpinoidea* | |
| E | Butterflyweed, *Asclepias tuberosa* | |
| E | Cardinal Flower, *Lobelia cardinalis* | |
| E | Common Mountain Mint, *Pycnanthemum virginianum* | |
| E | Foxglove Beardtongue, *Penstemon digitalis* | |
| E | Grassleaf Goldenrod, *Euthamia graminifolia* | |
| E | Great Blue Lobelia, *Lobelia siphilitica* | |
| E | Interrupted Fern, *Osmunda claytoniana* | |
| E | Jack-in-the-Pulpit, *Arisaema triphyllum* | |
| E | Kalm's St. John's Wort, *Hypericum kalmianum* | |
| E | Lady Fern, *Athyrium filix-femina* | |
| E | Leadplant, *Amorpha canescens* | |
| E | Marsh Blazingstar, *Liatris spicata* | |
| E | Meadow Anemone, *Amenone canadensis* | |
| E | Pale Purple Coneflower, *Mattueccia struthiopteris* | |
| E | Prairie Alum Root, *Heuchera richardsonii* | |
| E | Prairie Coreopsis, *Coreopsis palmata* | |

KEY: ☼/● = Sun/Shade 💧/○ = Wet/Dry = Butterflies = Birds = Wildlife




## Plant Key

F (green) = 1-2 ft. height
E (yellow) = 2-3 ft. height
D (gold) = 3-5 ft. height
C (purple) = 5-12 ft. height
B (blue) = 12-35 ft. height
A (grey) = 50+ height

**Strata A plants**, tall canopy-forming trees, are used to frame the house and provide shade. Remember to frame the house by using tall trees at far lot corners; do NOT frame the garage! Strata A plants can be located on the west or southwest sides to cast shade on living spaces. If this is not possible, use overhead pergola structures or roofs to provide shade in specific areas.

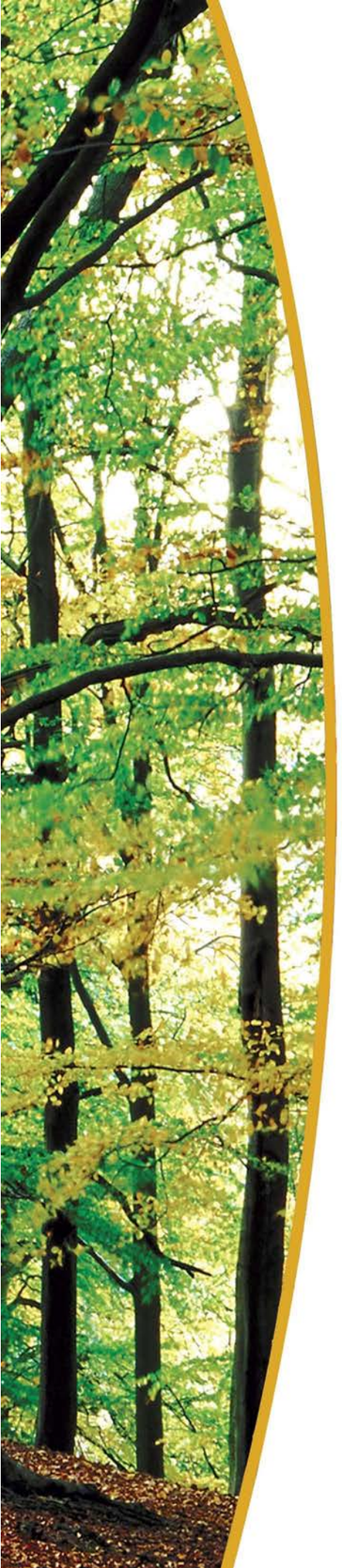
**Strata B plants** obscure bad views, form walls to enclose outdoor rooms and screen too-close neighbors. Strata B plants are used to accent building or living space corners, creating a transition from the tall house to the ground plane. Strata B plants can also be used next to a window to frame views from within the house.

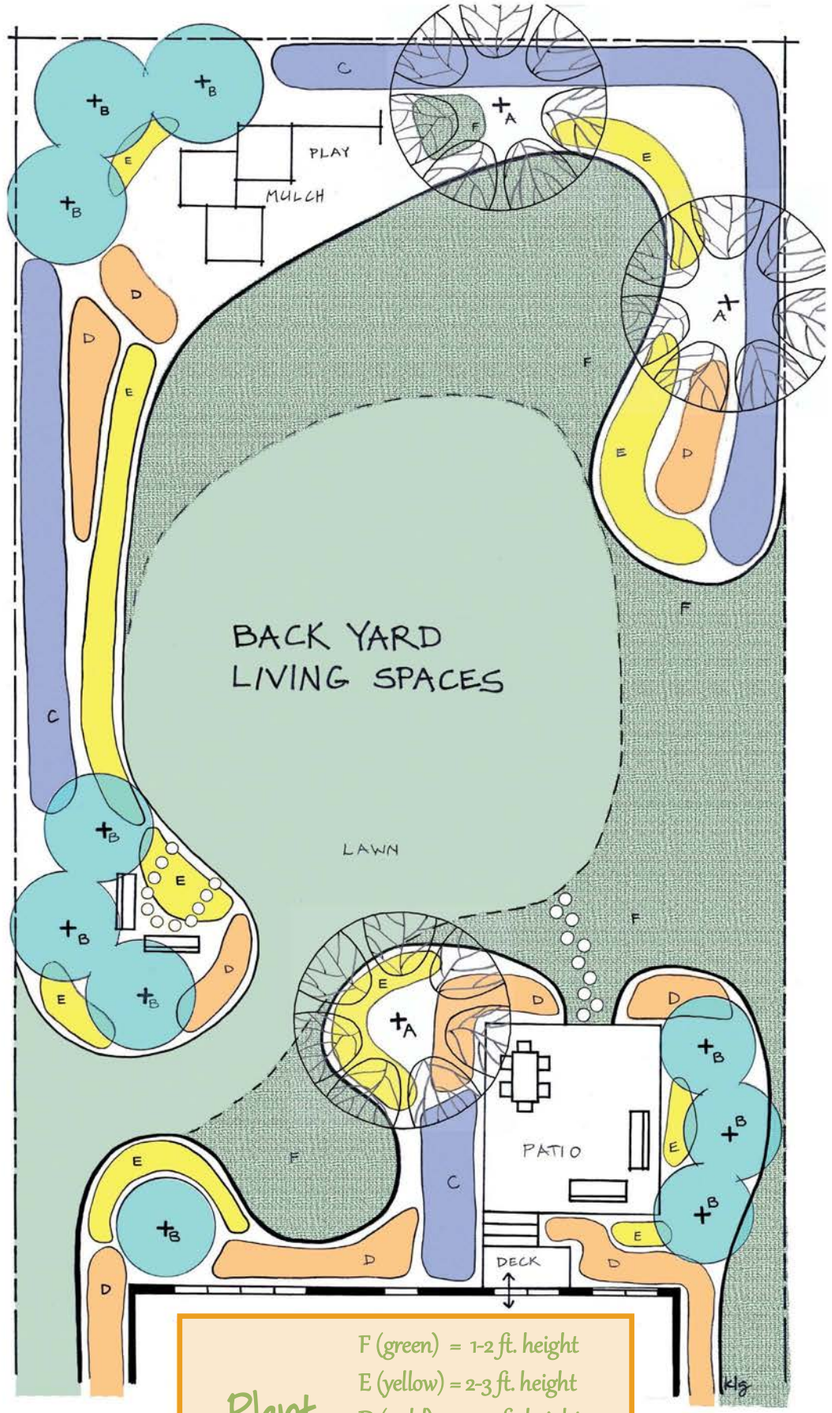
**Strata C plants** provide less wall-like and confining enclosures to living spaces. They are the best choice if you are trying to preserve sunlight for prairie plantings.

**Strata D plants** line the house foundation for transition from wall to ground and define edges of living spaces where views are desired. Strata D plants form backdrops to ornamental plantings and guide pedestrian traffic from living space to living space. In masses or lines, they create horizontal elements without blocking views or providing constraining enclosure.

**Strata E plants** provide color and texture fill for ornamental plantings and line walks and living space edges. They also create lines and shapes in the landscape.

**Strata F plants** are suitable for providing visual relief as lawn substitutes. It is more environmentally sound to use plants from Strata F that do not need mowing, watering or chemicals. Alternatively, minimize the size of the lawn by designing an interesting lawn shape, then filling the remainder with Strata F plants for monoculture visual relief, or with drifts of Strata E and Strata F plants for visual interest.






## Plant Key

F (green) = 1-2 ft. height
E (yellow) = 2-3 ft. height
D (gold) = 3-5 ft. height
C (purple) = 5-12 ft. height
B (blue) = 12-35 ft. height
A (grey) = 50+ height

# Native Plant Lists

These native plant lists are intended to be used as a guide and are not all-inclusive. Many of the more common, easily found and most desirable plants are listed.

| Ht | Common Name, *Botanical Name* | Conditions & Wildlife |
|---|---|---|
| A | American Linden, *Tilia americana* | ☼ |
| A | Bur Oak, *Quercus macrocarpa* | ☼ |
| A | White Oak, *Quercus alba* | ☼● |
| A | Northern Red Oak, *Quercus rubra* | ● |
| A | Shagbark Hickory, *Carya ovata* | ☼◊ |
| A | Sugar Maple, *Acer saccharum* | ☼ |
| A | Tulip Tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera* | ☼ |
| B | Cockspur Hawthorn, *Crataegus crus-galli* | ☼◊ |
| B | Hop Hornbeam, *Ostrya virginiana* | ☼ |
| B | Musclewood, *Carpinus caroliniana* | ● |
| B | Pagoda Dogwood, *Cornus alternifolia* | ●☼ |
| B | Redbud, *Cercis canadensis* | ● |
| B | Serviceberry, *Amelanchier spp.* | ☼ |
| B | Wafer Ash, *Ptelea trifoliata* | ☼◊ |
| B | Wild Plum, *Prunus americana* | ☼ |
| B | Witch Hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana* | ● |
| C | American Cranberry Bush, *Viburnum trilobum* | ●☼💧 |
| C | American Hazelnut, *Corylus americana* | ☼ |
| C | Arrowwood Viburnum, *Viburnum dentatum* | ☼ |
| C | Big Bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii* | ☼◊ |
| C | Black Chokeberry, *Aronia melanocarpa* | ☼ |
| C | Blue Vervain, *Verbena hastata* | ☼💧 |
| C | Buttonbush, *Cephalanthus occidentalis* | ☼💧 |
| C | Common Elderberry, *Sambucus canadensis* | ☼💧 |

| Ht | Common Name, *Botanical Name* | Conditions & Wildlife |
|---|---|---|
| C | Compass Plant, *Silphium laciniatum* | ◊☼ |
| C | Cup Plant, *Silphium perfoliatum* | ☼ |
| C | Fragrant Sumac, *Rhus aromatica* | ☼◊ |
| C | Indian Grass, *Sorghastrum nutans* | ☼◊ |
| C | Indigo Bush, *Amorpha fruiticosa* | ☼💧 |
| C | Joe Pye Weed, *Eupatorium spp.* | ●☼💧 |
| C | Ninebark, *Physocarpus opulifolius* | ☼ |
| C | Purple Flowering Raspberry, *Rubus odoratus* | ☼ |
| C | Purple Meadow Rue, *Thalictrum dasycarpum* | ☼💧 |
| C | Red-Osier Dogwood, *Cornus sericea* | ☼💧 |
| C | Spicebush, *Lindera benzoin* | ●💧 |
| C | Swamp Rose, *Rosa palustris* | ☼💧 |
| C | White Wild Indigo, *Baptisia alba macrophylla* | ☼◊ |
| C | Wild Senna, *Cassia hebecarpa* | ☼💧 |
| D | Bottlebrush Grass, *Elymus hystrix* | ● |
| D | Common Boneset, *Eupatorium perfoliatum* | ☼💧 |
| D | Culver's Root, *Veronicastrum virginicum* | ☼ |
| D | False Sunflower, *Heliopsis helianthoides* | ☼ |
| D | Gayfeather, *Liatris spp.* | ☼◊ |
| D | Goatsbeard, *Aruncus dioicus* | ●💧 |
| D | Golden Alexander, *Zizia aurea* | ☼ |
| D | Gro-Low Fragrant Sumac, *Rhus aromatic 'Grow Low'* | ☼● |

KEY: ☼/● = Sun/Shade 💧/◊ = Wet/Dry = Butterflies = Birds = Wildlife