



keep
Indianapolis
beautiful INC.

ADOPT-A-BLOCK

NATIVE PLANT FAQ

Why plant native?

Native plants play a vital role in capturing storm water, supporting native bee and pollinator populations, and beautify our city. Most foreign plants, while providing nectar to pollinators are not food sources for their young. Native plants are the first step in ensuring that our native birds and butterflies can survive in our city. Plus, they come back every year! You don't need to buy new plants each year this way.

How deep should I plant my new plants?

The new plugs should be pretty easy to plant with a trowel or soil knife. The hole only needs to be as deep as the plug. It's best to make sure that the plug is at least, if not slightly below soil level. If it is planted too far out of the ground it could run the risk of drying out or being pushed out of the soil if the ground becomes very dry.

Can I plant them in pots or containers?

Native plants have large root systems and sometimes very large tap roots. While they may survive for a year or two inside of a container it is best to get them in the ground as soon as possible to ensure that your plants have long healthy lives, with optimal blooming. Planting in containers will drastically shorten the life of the plants and reduce their ability to flower.

Do I need to water my plants, I thought natives don't require any maintenance?

Yes! In the first year it is very important to make sure that your plants get plenty of water to help them establish in their new homes, especially this summer. Observe the soil around your plants regularly, if it is very dry to the touch or plants are drooping make sure you give them a good dose of water, fully dampening the soil around the plant and roots. Once the plants have established either in one to two years, watering will only be required during drought conditions.

Why aren't my plants flowering?

Sometimes it takes new plants a little while to establish their roots. Some of the plants may flower this year but some may be focusing their energy on adapting to their new homes before flowering. Others may take years to flower as they won't be ready until they are fully mature (sometimes three to four years) before flowering. But these species should be ready to flower by next year on average.

Why did you select these plants?

We selected these plants because they are all hardy, tolerant species that grow in almost all soil types and conditions found in Indianapolis. When planted together, these plants should give you a variety of color throughout your garden from spring through fall. They also support a variety of native fauna that are reliant on these particular species to survive. Without them countless native butterflies and bees would not exist.

What does Full Sun or Part Shade mean?

Full sun means that this particular plant requires at least 6 hours of sun a day. This means that they should not be planted directly under large shade trees or near the house where the sun will be blocked. Part Shade or Part Sun means that plants need 3 – 6 hours of direct sunlight each day, some species may do better in Full Sun, but will tolerate Part Shade.

How far apart should I space my plants

We've included the spread of each plant to give you an idea of how wide they will grow. General rule of thumb is to give 2-3 feet to allow plants that spread through their roots room to expand in years to come. The plugs look small now, but they will get bigger fast!



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My plants look dead in the fall, what should I do?

Don't worry! Chances are they aren't dead, just dormant. Some people like how the dormant plants look throughout the winter, others think they look messy. Sometime between when the plants go dormant (usually around November–December) and when they are ready to regrow in the spring, the leaves and stems will need to be trimmed back to the ground. This can be done any time after the plants have gone dormant, but before you see new green growth. Typically they should be trimmed 1 – 3 inches from the base to make sure that there is plenty of air and light for the new spring growth. Many people leave up their dormant plants for as long as possible because they provide winter habitat and food source for native fauna.

My plants aren't coming back in the spring, what should I do?

Be patient, sometimes with new species that are establishing they may not be as active as the other plants around them. It's best to wait as long as possible before declaring something dead and digging it up. A lot of times the plant is just a little behind the other more established plants in the garden or this species doesn't start growing until later in the spring.

I don't like how the dead flowers/dormant plants look, what should I do?

Trim them! These are hardy plants that can handle pruning of leaves and stems. Pruning in moderation won't hurt the health or feelings of your plants. Trimming dead flowers is a great way to encourage new growth and flowers to begin forming. Dead flowers are an important food source for native birds so if you do cut them, you may still want to leave them out for hungry birds.

Do I need fertilizer?

You shouldn't need any fertilizers or soil amending. These plants have been adapting to Indiana soils for thousands of years. Planting natives is a great way to save money and keep our waterways clean and clear of fertilizer and pesticides that threaten all of our health and use up the city's resources.

There are bugs eating my plants, what should I do?

It's a little hard to believe, but this is good news! A variety of caterpillars and other insects need these plants as food sources to survive. You will observe holes in some leaves, but the bugs will not be a threat to the overall health of the plant or its ability to flower. This is all part of a natural ecosystem. Please don't use pesticides as it will kill all of the native fauna necessary to keep our urban ecosystem healthy.

Will these plants attract bees?

Yes, bees looking for nectar will be attracted to all flowering plants. If you are allergic or afraid of bees it may be best to put them away from doorways that you use regularly. Bees play a vital role in pollinating these and other native plants and should be left alone if you see them. Native bees are not aggressive, but caution is always the best approach if you are uneasy.

I need to move native plants, what do I do?

Not a problem, almost all of these species can be transplanted! Butterfly Weed is the only species with a large tap root and should be moved only as a last resort. Wait until the plants go dormant in the fall and move them before the ground freezes. Make sure you water them well after you move them and pay extra attention to anything you have moved the following spring as it may require watering again to help it establish in its new home.