

Wildflower Tips

Michigan State University Extension
Oakland County



Wildflowers continue to be a popular topic, and the reference books listed below may be helpful by providing additional information.

The terms native plants, wildflowers and weeds are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the same plants. "Native" indicates that a plant grows in a particular country, state or region naturally and is neither introduced through planting nor naturalized (the permanent establishment of a foreign plant in a native flora).

Many of the seed and nursery catalogs are now offering at least a limited selection of native species. Potential growers should check reference books to see where a particular species is a "native" before ordering. Importing seeds from other parts of the country to Michigan may not be desirable because of the possibility of the introduced species becoming a pest.

Individuals interested in establishing a wildflower planting can do so in a variety of ways. One is to quit mowing or cultivating a particular area and let native species move in via seeds brought to the area by the wind, birds, animals, etc. This method is relatively slow, but inexpensive. Another method is to sow seeds of desirable species in specific locations. Still another method is to purchase plants or obtain them from

their native habitat, such as a woods, roadside, ditchbank, etc., and move them to the desired location. There are several precautions that should be observed when using this method:

- Endangered species shouldn't be disturbed and there are state laws regulating the digging and transporting of plants that should be observed.
- Plants of a few species are sometimes available through specialized nurseries, but will be considerably more expensive than using seeds for propagation.

By far the easiest way to start a wildflower planting is to just quit mowing or cultivating an area and to sow seeds or fruits of several desirable species native to the area to hasten the development of the planting. Some of the more common annual weeds and grasses are usually the first inhabitants of such an area, followed by a variety of woody and herbaceous perennial species. For additional information on habitat regions, see the book *Michigan Trees* listed on next page.

Individuals interested in native species are encouraged to join one of the chapters of the Michigan Botanical Club. They are located in:

- East Lansing (Red Cedar Chapter)
- Ann Arbor (Huron Valley Chapter)
- Kalamazoo (Southwestern Chapter)
- Ypsilanti (Southeastern Chapter)

There is also a national group, National Wildflower Research Center, 2600 FM 973 North, Austin, TX 78725. They publish the newsletter *Wildflower*.

References on Wildflowers

Agricultural Experiment Stations of North Central States, 1981, ***Weeds of the North Central States***, Urbana, IL. (keys, descriptions and drawings)

Barnes, Burton V., and Warren H. Wagner, Jr. 1981, ***Michigan Trees***, Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Press, Approx. 380 pp. (contains summer and winter keys, descriptions with illustrations)

Canada, National Museums of. **Edible Wild Plants of Canada Series**, Ottawa, Canada. #1 *Edible Garden Weeds of Canada*, #2 *Wild Coffee and Tea Substitutes of Canada*, #3 *Edible Wild Fruits and Nuts of Canada*, #4 *Wild Green Vegetables of Canada* (each includes information on how to gather and prepare the foods, photos, illustrations, and recipes) Non-technical household knowledge. Approximately 175 pages each. Distributed by: The University of Chicago Press 5801 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637

Cranbrook Series, Bloomfield Hills, MI, Cranbrook Institute of Science.

- Billington, Cecil. ***Ferns of Michigan***. 1952. (good illustrations, includes folklore)

- Billington, Cecil. ***Shrubs of Michigan***. 1949. (key, collectors' data, distribution by County)
- Darlington, Henry T. ***The Mosses of Michigan***. 1964. (key, history, very good illustrations)
- Smith, Helen V. ***Michigan Wildflowers***. 1961. (illustrations, some color plates, keys, some information on how to grow)
- Steere, William Campbell. ***Liverworts of Southern Michigan***. 1940. (black and white plates/illustrations, key with descriptions)

Embertson, Jane. ***Pods: Wildflowers and Weeds in Their Final Beauty***. 1979. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Approx. 175 pages (color photos of flowers and pods; how to pick, arrange, identify)

Martin, Laura C. ***The Wildflower Meadow Book: A Gardener's Guide***. 1986. East Woods Press. 300 pages (Mostly black & white illustrations)

Ortho Books. ***Landscaping with Wildflowers and Native Plants***. 1984. 96 pages

Phillips, Harry. ***Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers***. 1985. The University of North Carolina Press. 331 pp. (includes much excellent information)

Young, James and Cheryl. ***Collecting, Processing, and Germinating Seed of Wildland Plants***. 1986. Timber Press, 9999 S.W. Wilshire, Portland, OR 97225. 230 pp.

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