GETTING STARTED WITH NATIVES
Sherrie Snyder, Founding Member Illinois Prairie Chapter of Wild Ones
ilprairiewo@gmail.com

Why Natives
- Improve the soil
- Improve water quality
- Less mowing
- Low maintenance (once established)
  - Do not require watering, fertilizing, pruning, dividing, deadheading, moving indoors, etc.
- Provide habitat for wildlife - food, shelter, nesting materials
- Support pollinators
- Are not invasive

Planning your Landscape
- It’s ok to mix natives and non-natives
- Be sure to avoid Non-native Invasives
  - Rose of Sharon
  - Vinca
  - Japanese barberry
  - English Ivy
  - Moneywort
  - Burning bush
  - Butterfly bush (not to be confused with butterfly milkweed)
  - Bradford Pear

- Know your property
  - Sun (determine levels of direct sun by direct observation; document your hourly findings in a sun chart or use a purchased sunlight meter)
    - Full Sun - 6 or more hours of direct sun
    - Part Sun - 4-6 hours of direct sun
    - Part Shade - 2-4 hours - no mid-day sun
    - Shade - fewer than 2 hours direct sun
  - Soil
    - Fertility (have your soil analyzed by a soil testing company)
    - Drainage - Dig a hole 1’ deep and 1’ wide; fill with water; Wait an hour
      - <1” drained = poorly drained, wet (clay)
      - 3-6” drained = well drained, mesic (loam)
      - > 6” drained = dry (sand)
    - Moisture - also affected by the “lay of the land”
      - Dry - upland, south-facing
      - Mesic - average soil
      - Wet - low lying areas, soil around ponds, north-facing
Selecting the Right Natives

- Determine Your Goals
  - Attract Butterflies
  - Attract Birds
  - Attract Hummingbirds
  - Retain Rain Water
  - Provide Winter Appeal
  - Block a View
  - Deer Resistant
  - Other

- Know the plant’s characteristics
  - Height
  - Width - spread or spacing
  - Color
  - Bloom season
- Match plant’s sun and moisture needs to the characteristics of planting bed
- Determine which natives grow together in nature

Design Your Landscape - using the plant information that you collected, create a scaled-sized drawing of each planting bed, using appropriate-sized circles to indicate the spread of the plants you have selected

Adding Natives to Your Yard

- Plant plants anytime after first frost into the fall
- Find the right location - sun, moisture needs
- Water regularly for the first season
- Do not fertilize
- Plant bare root in the fall
- Plant seeds in late fall or winter (or indoors Feb 1st)

Planting Tips

- Plant plants close together
- Plant like plants in clumps to attract pollinators
- Make sure there’s something in bloom throughout the growing season
- Plant a little at a time
- Label what you plant
- Take pictures - before and after

Caveats

- Native plants ...
  - support insects - expect to see insects on your plants; that’s ok
  - re-seed - will fill in empty spaces
  - may fall over (intersperse grasses to provide support and root competition, or cut back to 12” in June and again before blooming for fall bloomers)
  - are perennials, so they have a shorter bloom time - plan accordingly with plants in your garden that will bloom at different times
- Don’t buy “Wildflowers in a Can” - many contain invasive plants
- Neighbors
  - Create neighbor-friendly plantings
  - Be an ambassador for natives
Great Natives for Landscaping

- Prairie Blazing Star (Liatris pycnostachya)
- Wild Petunia (Ruella humilis)
- Fire Pink (Silene virginica)
- Royal Catchfly (Silene regia)
- Pale Purple Coneflower (Echinacea pallida)
- Butterfly Milkweed (Asclepias tuberosa)
- Lance-leaf Coreopsis (Coreopsis lanceolata)
- Columbine (Aquilegia canadensis)
- Wild Ginger (Asarum canadense)
- Prairie Dropseed (Sporobolus heterolepis)
- Little Bluestem (Schizachyrium scoparium)
- New Jersey Tea (Ceanothus americanus)
- Serviceberry (Amelanchier arborea)
- Christmas Fern (Polystichum acrostichoides)
- Marginal Wood Fern (Dryopteris marginalis)

Where to Find Natives

- For sale (see handout)
  - Native Plant Sales
  - Nurseries
- Plant rescues
- Grow your own
  - Buy seeds
  - Collect seeds (with owner’s permission)

A Note on Native Cultivars

- “Nativars” are the result of artificial selections made by humans
- Result in the loss of genetic diversity
- May not function in the ecosystem as the true native
Resources

http://illinoisprairie.wildones.org  (Local Wild Ones chapter)
www.illinoiswildflowers.info (Information on native IL plants)
http://plants.usda.gov/about_plants.html (maps showing where a plant occurs natively)
www.mortonarb.org/  (Morton Arboretum in Lisle, IL - lots of general information)
www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/gardens-gardening/your-garden/plant-finder.aspx (Missouri Botanical Garden - Once you’ve determined that a plant is native to Central IL, this website offers landscaping advice and general information for each plant.)

Bringing Nature Home; Douglas W. Tallamy
Native Plants in the Home Landscape; Keith Gerard Nowakowski
Go Native!; Carolyn Harstad
Birdscaping in the Midwest; Mariette Nowak
Design your Natural Midwest Garden; Patricia Hill
Wildflowers in Your Garden; Viki Ferreniea
The Midwestern Native Garden: Native Alternatives to Non-native Flowers and Plants; Charlotte Adelman & Bernard L. Schwartz

Soil Testing

United Soils, Inc.-- P.O. Box 226 -- 108 S Crystal Lane -- Fairbury, IL 61839 -- 815-692-4483
Check the phone book for other labs in the area.

Sources for Native Plants

- Grow your own from locally collected seeds
- Illinois Native Plant Society Sale - (usually the last Saturday in April, Illinois State Fairgrounds Commodities Building)  www.ill-inps.org/index.php/
- Fell Arboretum Plant Sale at ISU (usually the weekend before ISU graduation at School and Beaufort Streets in Normal) http://arboretum.illinoisstate.edu/events/
- Grand Prairie Friends Native Plant Sale  www.grandprairiefriends.com
  (usually the second Saturday in May at 201 Lincoln Square, Urbana, IL)
- Illinois Prairie Wild Ones Native Plant Sale - 3rd Saturday in May check the website for specifics and a tentative list of plants for sale)
  http://illinoisprairie.wildones.org/nativeplantsale/
- Simply Native Nursery  681 State Hwy 135 -- Alexis, IL 61412
  www.simplynativensery.com (online catalog available)
- Possibility Place (Specializes in native trees and shrubs - has some perennials)
  www.possibilityplace.com - informative website
- Prairie Moon Nursery  -www.prairiemoon.com (great website and free catalog)
- Prairie Nursery  - www.prairienuersery.com (great website and free catalog)
- Local Nurseries - several are starting to carry natives - Casey’s, Niepagan’s, Owen’s in Bloomington/Normal