

WHAT IS A NATIVAR?

A nativar is a cultivar of a native plant. Nativars can occur in nature (such as the Annabelle Hydrangea) or they can be produced in the nursery trade by crossing two plants or selecting for certain traits (such as leaf or flower color, flower form, plant height, etc.). Nativars for sale in a garden center can usually be recognized by looking closely at the plant's name tag. Tags of nativars should have the name of the cultivated variety in single quotes following the scientific name of the plant. Examples include the little bluestem cultivar, *Schizachyrium scoparium* 'The Blues' which has a blue tint to the leaves; the purple coneflower cultivar, *Echinacea purpurea* 'Tiki Torch' which has yellow flowers; and the swamp milkweed cultivar, *Asclepias incarnata* 'Ice Ballet' which has white flowers. Plants labeled with only the genus name (e.g., *Schizachyrium*) are typically not true natives. A straight native plant should be labeled with both the genus and species name (e.g., *Schizachyrium scoparium* for Little Bluestem) and with no cultivar name in single quotes.

ARE NATIVARS GOOD?

Some nativars may provide the same ecological benefit in your yard as the straight native, some may not. So if a goal of your landscaping is to support wildlife, such as pollinators, natives are the best choice. Research is being conducted by Doug Tallamy and his graduate student to determine which nativars are beneficial to wildlife and which are not. This article from the National Wildlife Federation summarizes Tallamy's preliminary results.

<https://www.nwf.org/News-and-Magazines/National-Wildlife/Gardening/Archives/2016/Cultivars.aspx>

WILD ONES POSITION ON NATIVARS

Wild Ones does not support the use of nativars in native plantings and has issued a position paper explaining why. That paper can be found using the following link.

<http://www.wildones.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Nativars-Statement-with-reference.pdf>

OUR GRANT PROGRAM POSITION ON NATIVARS

Because of Wild Ones' position on nativars, our chapter's grant program does not support the use of nativars. Please see the Grant page of our website for more information.

<http://illinoisprairie.wildones.org/grants/>