

# NATIVE PRAIRIE PLANTS FOR MIDWESTERN RAIN GARDENS ON LOAMY AND CLAY SOILS

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Rain gardens are subject to fluctuating soil moisture conditions, from flooded and submerged after a big storm, to bone dry during extended summer drought. Loamy and clay soils tend to retain moisture in the subsoil, making them an excellent medium for supporting plants that grow in wet prairies, wet mesic prairies, and sedge meadows.

The plants below have been selected for use in rain gardens in the Midwestern United States in medium or “mesic” soils. These include loam, silt loam, and clay loam soils. Rain gardens are recommended for planting in sunny sites that receive at least one half day of full sun. The plants below have been selected based upon the following criteria:

- 1) Grow in wet soil conditions when temporarily flooded for a day or two after a hard rain, and in dry soil conditions during periods of summer drought
- 2) Tolerant of heavy clay soil
- 3) Non-aggressive by seed or underground creeping rhizomes
- 4) Grow in full sun to at least one half day sun (not for shaded rain garden situations)
- 5) Attractive flowers, foliage, and textures
- 6) Ability to attract and support birds, butterflies, and other desirable wildlife

## **Short Flowers (1-3 feet tall)**

<b><u>Scientific Name</u></b>	<b><u>Common Name</u></b>	<b><u>Color</u></b>	<b><u>Bloom Time</u></b>
Allium cernuum	Nodding Pink Onion	White/Pink	July-Aug
Amsonia tabernaemontana	Common Bluestar	Blue	May-June
Camassia scilloides	Wild Hyacinth	White	May-June
Chelone glabra	White Turtlehead	White	Aug-Sept
Dodecatheon meadia	Shootingstar	White/Pink	May-June
Gentiana andrewsii	Bottle Gentian	Blue	Aug-Oct
Iris shrevei	Wild Iris	Blue	June-July
Iris versicolor	Blue Flag Iris	Blue	June-July
Lobelia siphilitica	Great Blue Lobelia	Blue	July-Sept
Mimulus ringens	Monkeyflower	Blue	June-Aug
Penstemon digitalis	Smooth Penstemon	White	June-July
Phlox glaberrima	Marsh Phlox	Red/Purple	June-July
Solidago ohioensis	Ohio Goldenrod	Yellow	Aug-Sept
Solidago rigida	Stiff Goldenrod	Yellow	Aug-Sept
Zizia aurea	Golden Alexanders	Yellow	May-July

**Medium Height Flowers (3-6 feet tall)**

<b><u>Scientific Name</u></b>	<b><u>Common Name</u></b>	<b><u>Color</u></b>	<b><u>Bloom Time</u></b>
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	Red Milkweed	Red/Pink	June-July
<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	New England Aster	Pink/Purple/Blue	Aug-Oct
<i>Baptisia lactea</i>	White False Indigo	White	June-July
<i>Cassia hebecarpa</i>	Wild Senna	Yellow	July-Aug
<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i>	Joe Pye Weed	Pink	Aug-Sept
<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>	Boneset	White	Aug-Sept
<i>Filipendula rubra</i>	Queen of the Prairie	Pink	June-July
<i>Helenium autumnale</i>	Dogtooth Daisy	Yellow	Aug-Sept
<i>Hibiscus palustris</i>	Rose Mallow	Pink	July-Sept
<i>Liatris pycnostachya</i>	Prairie Blazingstar	Purple/Pink	July-Aug
<i>Liatris spicata</i>	Dense Blazingstar	Purple/Pink	Aug-Sept
<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	Cardinal Flower	Red	July-Sept
<i>Rudbeckia subtomentosa</i>	Sweet Black Eyed Susan	Yellow	Aug-Oct
<i>Thalictrum dasycarpum</i>	Tall Meadowrue	White	June-July
<i>Verbena hastata</i>	Blue Vervain	Blue	July-Sept
<i>Vernonia fasciculata</i>	Ironweed	Red/Pink	July-Sept
<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>	Culver's Root	White	July-Aug

**Tall Flowers (6-10 feet tall)**

<b><u>Scientific Name</u></b>	<b><u>Common Name</u></b>	<b><u>Color</u></b>	<b><u>Bloom Time</u></b>
<i>Eupatorium fistulosum</i>	Tall Joe Pye Weed	Purple/Pink	Aug-Sept
<i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i>	Green Headed Coneflower	Yellow	Aug-Sept
<i>Silphium terebinthinaceum</i>	Prairie Dock	Yellow	July-Sept
<i>Vernonia altissima</i>	Tall Ironweed	Red/Pink	Aug-Sept

**Grasses and Sedges (1-5 feet tall)**

<b><u>Scientific Name</u></b>	<b><u>Common Name</u></b>	<b><u>Fall Color</u></b>	<b><u>Bloom Time</u></b>
<i>Elymus canadensis</i>	Canada Wild Rye	Straw	July-Aug
<i>Elymus virginicus</i>	Virginia Wild Rye	Straw	July-Aug
<i>Hierochloe odorata*</i>	Vanilla Sweet Grass	Straw	July-Aug
<i>Carex comosa</i>	Bottlebrush Sedge	Green	May-June
<i>Carex hystericina</i>	Porcupine Sedge	Green	May-June
<i>Carex muskingumensis*</i>	Palm Sedge	Golden-Brown	May-June
<i>Carex stipata</i>	Awl Fruited Sedge	Golden-Brown	May-June
<i>Carex vulpinoidea</i>	Fox Sedge	Golden-Brown	May-June

\* Vanilla Sweetgrass and Palm Sedge creep by rhizomes and can be somewhat aggressive. Both are low-growing and shallow-rooted, and usually do not interfere with the growth of other flowers, grasses, and sedges in the rain garden.

**Aggressive Plants NOT RECOMMENDED for Rain Gardens**

<b><u>Scientific Name</u></b>	<b><u>Common Name</u></b>	<b><u>Method of Spread</u></b>
<i>Flowers</i>		
Anemone canadensis	Canada Anemone	Rhizomes
Boltonia asteroides	False Aster	Rhizomes
Cacalia atriplicifolia	Pale Indian Plantain	Seeds (aggressive biennial)
Coreopsis tripteris	Tall Coreopsis	Seeds
Desmodium canadense	Canada Tick Trefoil	Seeds, with stick-tights!
Helianthus grosseserratus	Sawtooth Sunflower	Rhizomes and Seeds
Heliopsis helianthoides	Ox Eye Sunflower	Seeds
Physostegia virginiana	Obedient Plant	Rhizomes
<i>Grasses</i>		
Andropogon gerardi	Big Bluestem	Seeds
Panicum virgatum	Switchgrass	Seeds
Spartina pectinata	Prairie Cordgrass	Rhizomes

The flowers and grasses listed above have many positive attributes and often make good members of prairie meadows. However, they can be overly aggressive in garden situations, and should be avoided.

Have fun selecting your plants for you rain garden, and enjoy all the birds and butterflies that will visit your wetland habitat!