What is a native plant?

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) defines a native plant as one that occurred within Pennsylvania before European settlement. Native plants include ferns; grasses and sedges; annual, biennial and perennial wildflowers; trees, shrubs and vines that covered “Penn’s Woods” when English, Dutch, German and Swedish settlers brought their agricultural plants and associated weeds to the colony. More than 2,100 plant species make up the native botanical heritage of Pennsylvania.

Why should I care about native plants?

Native plants create beautiful landscapes that provide wildlife habitat and reduce maintenance costs. They also help our local ecosystem with their roots breaking up soil and retaining water, providing nesting places for birds and small animals, and offering a source of food for butterflies and other insects. Pennsylvania’s native plants give a high-quality educational experience right in their own backyard, park, school, or workplace.

In Summary

1. Learn what plants are native to your area. Many field guides and online resources can help you get started. Days afield in your local ecosystem can provide a wildflower identification lesson you will not soon forget.
2. Go native! Wild Bergamot.
3. Protect existing native plant communities from disturbance by removing plants from the wild.
4. Buy nursery-propagated native plants.
5. To grow your own native plants, start from seed. Many retail nurseries and mail-order catalogs now offer native plants. If you want guaranteed ornamental characteristics, named cultivars of native species are available in some cases. Cultivars are grown from local seed sources. Plants grown from seed provide more variety than cloned cultivars.
6. Practice responsible landscaping. For more information and a list of native plant and non-native weeds to the colony. More than 2,100 plant species make up the native botanical heritage of Pennsylvania.

To learn more about native plants, visit: http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/nativeplants/index.htm

Monarda fistulosa

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