



## REALISTIC GARDENING

# The Low-Effort Garden Blueprint (Using Native Plants)

Does your Garden Feels Like a Full-Time Job? Are you fed up with:

- Constant watering?
- Weeding that never ends?
- Plants that die randomly?
- Feeling behind or guilty?

The truth is most gardens are designed **against** nature not with it, and most gardeners have been secretly led into a lucrative trap set by the

corporations that sell the plants, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and gardening services we have come to rely on. These corporations have convinced us that gardening should be complicated, time-consuming, and expensive. Nurseries and landscapers sell us non-native plants (including lawns) that are *not* adapted to our local area and we soon realize that these plants need a lot of inputs (water, pesticides, fertilizers) and attention to keep them healthy. .

But what if I told you it doesn't have to be this way? What if I told you that by incorporating native plants into your garden (including your vegetable garden) you could drastically reduce your gardening workload and make gardening enjoyable again?

# **Native Plants & How They Practically Take Care of Themselves**

Native plants are plants that have evolved in a particular area for thousands (or millions!) of years. In the United States, plants that have been present in the United States since before European settlement are considered native.

Since native plants have evolved in the same area for so long, they have become well adapted to that area's climate, soil, and moisture levels (rain, humidity) which means that once established, they don't need any watering; they will simply live off the rain as they have done since the beginning of time.



**Bee on Wild Bergamot/Beebalm (*monarda fistulosa*)**

Native plants have also co-evolved with other species and have formed specialized relationships; native plants play a very important role in the ecosystem by providing food and habitat, and attracting many different species that keep each other in check.



**Monarch Caterpillar on a Milkweed Leaf**

In some cases, as in the case of the Monarch Butterfly, native plants like Milkweed (*asclepias* spp.) play a crucial role since milkweed is the **ONLY** type of plant a monarch caterpillar can eat; without it this species of butterfly cannot complete its lifecycle.

## **What this all means for you:**

- Eco-Friendly Garden: native plants are

adapted to the soil and climate so you don't need fertilizers, a watering schedule (after the first year) or a pruning schedule. That means a lower water bill and more time to enjoy the garden.

- **Less Maintenance:** native plants attract insects, birds, and other wildlife which act as a natural pest control service in your garden so you will not need to apply toxic pesticides for pest control; the other species attracted to your garden, like ladybugs, praying mantises, birds, etc., will hunt down and eat their fill of pests and a balance will be reached over time. For this reason, it is imperative that pesticides not be used near native plants!

- **TIP: A native plant garden near a vegetable**

**garden ensures 24/7 security patrol of every single leaf, stem, and fruit, and the best part is that you won't need to pick any bugs off by hand or spray anything- they will police each other.**

- *Save Money:* most native plants are perennial so they will die back and return year after year as long as their roots remain in the ground. Native plants are also adept at multiplying themselves and filling in an area, so you won't *need* to purchase new plants each year - that means more money in your pocket.
- *Peace:* Your garden will feel alive and purposeful, and you will feel inspired to spend more time outside observing the garden rather than constantly toiling away in

it and being stressed by it

Comparison of care between traditional and native plant gardens		
Garden Task	Traditional Garden	Native Plant Garden
Watering	Constant	Little to none
Fertilizing	Often	Never
Weeding	Weekly	Weekly/Bi-weekly
Pesticides	Often	Never
Herbicides	Often	Never

## Dealing with the lawn:

If most of your garden woes center around lawn care, then consider taking one of the these three approaches:

- **Reduce the lawn area:** carve out a piece of lawn and install- you guessed it- a native

plant garden. Over time, this garden can be expanded or you can add another one and further reduce the mowable areas.

- **Replace the lawn** with mowable native grasses like Purple Love Grass (*eragrostis spectabilis*), Blue Grama (*bouteloua gracilis*), Pennsylvania Sedge (*carex Pennsylvania*), or other varieties native to your area. Native species are adapted to the soil and climate, and won't need all the inputs of a traditional lawn.
- **Leave the lawn as is**, weeds and all, and mow it. Use an edger to tidy up the borders and help create the illusion of a patch of lawn. This approach works particularly well in hellstrips (curbside grass).

# How to Sheet Mulch Your Garden

A simple, step-by-step guide to convert lawns or weedy areas into garden beds using organic materials and cardboard to smother vegetation.



Convert parts of your lawn to a native plant garden using this organic method

## How to Start Overhauling Your Garden:

- Step 1: Start small (one bed or corner).
- Step 2: Remove 1-3 high-maintenance non-native plants.
- Step 3: Replace with native equivalents. Find plants native to your area [here](#)
- Step 4: Mulch with compost, cedar mulch, or skip the mulch and create a dense planting of smaller plants to create a kind of living mulch

over time.

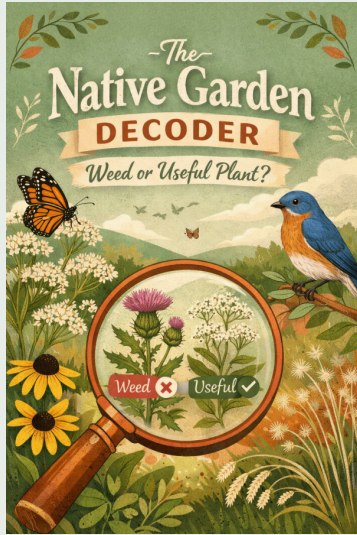
- Step 5: Water regularly for the first year.
- Step 5: Keep the area as weed-free as you can; 15 minutes each week can be enough depending on how many plants you have. I recommend a action/stirrup hoe to minimize bending. Find it [here](#).
- Step 6: Watch your plants grow

## **Action Plan:**

- Pick one area this week
- Create a short plant list (find native plants [here](#))
- Read [this](#) article about starting a native plant garden
- Remember, the garden doesn't have to be "perfect"; work towards developing a functional and mostly self-sustaining garden.

[www.realisticgardening.com](http://www.realisticgardening.com)

# 3 Apps to Help You Plan & Maintain Your Garden:



## PLANT IDENTIFICATION APP

- Identifies all types of plants
- Lets you know if the plant is native to your area
- Tells you what ecological benefits the plant provides
- Lets you know if the plant is invasive & tells you how to remove it

Get it here :

<https://realisticgardener.gumroad.com//iopqjvl>



## PLANT CARE CALENDAR & GUIDE

- Gives you a personalized month by month breakdown of garden tasks
- Gives you recommendations for caring for specific [native] plants

Get it here :

<https://realisticgardener.gumroad.com//eumrch>



## NATIVE GARDEN DESIGN APP

- Provides a planting plan complete with a plant list and planting grid
- Gives you a mock up image of what your garden will look like once the plants are blooming

Get it here :

<https://realisticgardener.gumroad.com/tsgzw>