

The Garden Corner

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Master Gardeners of Johnson County Missouri

This is the second in a four part series discussing the possibility of “Growing Native”. Since we are experiencing some of the coldest temperatures we have seen in at least twenty years and there are not many of us venturing outside to do garden chores, this month’s topic could easily pertain to the types of plants you might want to consider. Before listing some of my favorites which do extremely well in our location, let me give you the name and contact information for the nursery we have used to get our starter plants.

If you have access to a computer, you can go to their website: www.mowildflowers.net to view and order. To receive their catalog through the mail, write to: Missouri Wildflowers Nursery, 9814 Pleasant Hill Road, Jefferson City, MO 65109. As an added suggestion, if you decide to purchase some of their plants, I would encourage you to ask for the larger quart sized pots. You will be absolutely amazed at the size of the plants you receive and the root mass will blow your mind. While the nursery offers a full line of vegetation (e.g. trees, shrubs, seeds, grasses, sun and shade) the list below is comprised of full sun loving specimens.

Purple Milkweed is loved by all butterflies and grows to a height of three to four feet. What you might like best about the milkweed besides being deer resistant; bugs will leave it alone. Bush’s Poppy Mallow is a spectacular addition to the front of any bed. It grows to about a foot high and with its “hot pink” flowers attracts not only hummingbirds but the huge sphinx moth as well. If kept deadheaded it will bloom from very early summer to well past the first frost. I promise you won’t be disappointed and, in fact, this flower may well become one of your favorites. We all know about coneflowers and how prolific they can be. But, there is another type of coneflower that maintains its low growing, rounded appearance and blooms it heart out: Longhead Coneflower. Give this one some room to grow because in its first year it will easily spread to a three foot width. Wild goldenrod is easily one of our state’s more recognizable field plants; but, it tends to blow over in high winds and does not do well in heavy rains. Fear not! Order the Rigid Goldenrod and let the winds and rains come. This beast of a plant can take all our spring and summers can throw at it and come back for more. A word of caution however – be sure to prune the plant when it reaches about two feet because if left alone it will grow to six feet easily! With the addition of these plants you will be well on your way to growing and enjoying the benefits of our native wildflowers.

To round out our discussion of native plants, here are some gentle reminders to encourage you to “Grow Native”. These plants have evolved to use our existing soil. In other words you do not have to amend the flower bed before planting. They have also become accustomed to our weather which means once they become established they will not require lots of watering during our dry periods. To protect themselves from the local bug population bent on destroying them, most “natives” have developed defenses against attack. Obviously their natural defenses mean we do not have to spend money on pesticides thereby making our environment more human friendly. And, last but not least, most the

critters we share the planet with really do not like eating these types of wildflowers so we get to enjoy the full growth without experiencing the horror of discovering during an early morning walk that some browsing criminal has eaten one of our prized possessions.

That will do it for another month. Alternatives to herbicides and pesticides will be the final two articles in the coming months. Until then for your questions/comments: Write to: 370 NW 121 Road, Warrensburg, MO 64093 or email to: mandpak@embarqmail.com and we'll try to shed some light on each other's growing habits.