

Right Plant, Right Place

Choosing the right plant for the right place is an important consideration for all types of gardening and landscaping. For most of my customers the objective is to select plants that will not only thrive but also help create a beautiful and easily maintained landscape. However, success involves more than just choosing the right plants. It requires understanding the relationship between the design, establishment, and maintenance of the landscape.

In my own design process, I often begin by evaluating the client's maintenance issues. In order to pick the right plants for the right place, the maintenance needs and requirements should be reflected in the landscape design. Your budget, access to equipment, and time constraints are some of the factors you should consider in your own design. Once the design is complete you can then consider the many ways to establish the vegetation.

We offer these general suggestions when choosing plants for your project:

- Rely heavily on natives that are broadly adapted and establish easily. Herbaceous plants like Monarda, Boneset, Black-eyed Susan, Bluestem Goldenrod, Bottlebrush Grass, and others serve well as "transitional species" in various plantings. A short list of broadly adapted trees and shrubs includes Red Osier and Silky Dogwood, Shrubby Cinquefoil, Hazelnut, Nannyberry, Yellow Birch, Red Oak, Bur Oak, Swamp White Oak and Sycamore.
- Some species will not readily establish with the initial planting. Plan to add these species over time.
- Use a rich mix of species to create a sustainable landscape attractive to wildlife, but rely on a few species to make up the foundation of the planting. A rich mix of species will also help stave off the establishment of unwanted plants.
- Most disturbed sites tend to be drier than the surrounding native landscape. For this reason err on the side of choosing plants that tolerate drier conditions than you might think.
- Instead of amending the site conditions to suit the requirements of the plants, choose plants well adapted to your site.
- Finally, include native plants that are symbolic of your particular locality. This is the first step toward recreating a landscape representative of our natural heritage. If you are unsure what those species are, ask us.

We encourage you to become actively involved in the creation of your native landscape and hope these suggestions will help you along the way.

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