

# USE NATIVE PLANTS FOR HABITAT OR BIODIVERSITY

City of St. Louis Sustainable Neighborhood Initiative



## DESCRIPTION

Native plants and flowers indigenous to Missouri are typically hardiest and most acclimated to St. Louis growing conditions. Native species are well-suited to the local climate and soil, and they attract beneficial insects, birds, bees, and other creatures to create a healthier and more biodiverse urban habitat. They usually require less water, chemical fertilizer, and maintenance, so they keep soils, rivers, and streams healthy, and improve human connection with landscape and wildlife. Natives attract pollinators and enhance urban production of herbs, fruit, vegetables and honey.

## NEIGHBORHOOD BENEFITS

### Environmental

- Improved biodiversity, local habitat, and neighborhood greening
- Conserved water use and filtered stormwater runoff
- Reduced fertilizer pollution in rivers and streams
- Improved air and water quality
- Decreased chances of invasive plant species

### Social

- Reduced exposure to harmful chemicals
- Improved public perception of the neighborhood or site
- Increased access to natural areas for beauty, recreation, and learning

### Economic

- Reduced funds spent on replanting, yard waste disposal, fertilizer, water, lawn mowing and long-term maintenance
- Potential to sell native plant products, like honey or berries



## RELATED TOOLS

When paired with other tools, native plants can make a greener, healthier, and more beautiful neighborhood. Think about saving water and energy, local food, urban gardens, and green infrastructure. Native plants and flowers can work well with the following tools:

- **Create a Pollinator Garden**
- **Convert Hardscape Areas to Pervious Surfaces**
- **Establish a Community Garden or Local Food Installation**
- **Install Rain Gardens or Bioswales**

## EXAMPLES

### Thurman Gateway Park, St. Louis, MO

Native urban prairie installation located along highway 44 underpass.

### 13th Street Community Garden, Old North, St. Louis, MO

A Hub Community Garden providing food for the North City Farmers Market.

### Florissant Community Garden, Florissant, MO

Garden and pollination project with the community, **PAUSE**, the St. Louis Zoo, National Museums of Kenya, and Tohono Chui Park.



## GET STARTED

- 1. Vision** Create a long-term vision and goal for the project in partnership with a committee that is inclusive of the entire community, including youth, seniors, business owners, and residents. Identify the organizing structure, future projects, and possible partners.
- 2. Inform** The pilot project should be visible and accessible to the public and have educational material and signage to inform visitors about the project and program.
- 3. Brainstorm** Brainstorm what kind of native plant project or program will be best for your neighborhood. Ask the following questions:
  - Who will maintain the project or run the program?
  - How will neighbors benefit, and how can they be involved?
  - Does the neighborhood association have funding or will outside resources be needed?
  - What are the primary objectives? Habitat; Education; Pollination; Green Space; Water Filtration; or Attracting birds, bees, and butterflies?
- 4. Research** There are numerous resources available in St. Louis for getting ideas, how-to instruction, examples, guidance and funding for creating a native landscape project. Helpful organizations are **Gateway Greening**, **Brightside St. Louis**, **PAUSE St. Louis Zoo**, **the EPA**, and **Wild Ones**. To determine what native plants are best suited for your project, where to plant them, and how to care for them, visit **Missouri Botanical Garden**, **Grow Native!**, and **Missouri Department of Conservation**. To find native plant seeds, visit **St. Louis Audubon Society** and **Missouri Department of Conservation**. Also check out **Milkweeds for Monarchs: The St. Louis Butterfly Project** for helpful information on creating a monarch garden.
- 5. Find a Site** If working on public property such as a park or **Land Reutilization Authority (LRA)** owned lot, be sure to coordinate with the **Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department** or the **St. Louis Development Corporation (SLDC)**, respectively. LRA properties can usually be leased for a nominal fee if your use is approved.
- 6. Design** Design a pilot project. Use the above listed resources to create a design and construction plan. Work with those resources and perhaps a local gardener or landscape architect to help with the design. Consider the maintenance and upkeep of the landscape and who will be responsible for its care, particularly if there are active elements like bees or harvesting of fruits, vegetables, or herbs. Ensure the overall safety of residents in the design and placement of active elements.
- 7. Organize** Organize and advertise workdays. Contact your neighborhood association for help and volunteers. Ensure that you have plants, soil, and other materials delivered on time. Ask community members to lend tools, gloves and other necessary equipment for planting, or plan to buy necessary equipment beforehand.
- 8. Work** Host your workday(s). Gather and assign tasks to your volunteers and build your native landscape. Organize this event at the right time of year so your plants will thrive and your naturescape will be successful. Plan for maintenance and upkeep days following the initial workdays to make sure your plants are flourishing.



## RELATED SUSTAINABILITY PLAN CATEGORIES

This tool supports the following goals and strategies:

### Urban Character, Vitality & Ecology

Strategies: C5-Maintain Public spaces and neighborhood streets; E5-Promote inclusion of native plants and habitats on public and private land; H3-Provide special lot-purchasing programs and encourage creative temporary and permanent land uses; H8-Enhance community cleaning and beautification efforts.

### Health, Well-Being & Safety

Strategies: B4-Educate residents about alternatives to use of toxic materials and hazardous chemicals; B6-Remediate and redevelop contaminated land.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. Host** Host events or programs that take advantage of the new greenspace and build community involvement and support such as native plant workshops, farmer's markets, urban wildlife programs, healthy eating programs, and children's gardening classes
- 2. Harvest** Harvest seeds to save for future projects.

For the most current examples, updated tools, and information, visit the City's Sustainable Neighborhood Initiative website:

[www.stlouis-mo.gov/sustainability](http://www.stlouis-mo.gov/sustainability)