

Blue Flag Iris

Iris virginica shrevei



Color: Blue-Violet

Blooms: June - September

Mature Height: 2-4'

Mature Width: 3-6'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Moist Mesic-Wet

Planting Tips: Like most iris species, this lovely native specimen tends to spread through rhizomes, forming a clumped colony over time. The blue flag iris prefers moist to wet soils, and naturally grows in wet prairies, soggy meadows along streams and rivers, and in low woodland areas. It prefers full sun, and may not flower if planted in shady areas. It makes a lovely addition in rain gardens and along pond or creek banks. Deer resistant.

Blue Vervain

Verbena hastata



Color: Blue Violet

Blooms: Mid - Late Summer

Mature Height: 4- 5'

Mature Width: 1-2'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Moist Mesic - Wet

Planting Tips: This attractive bloomer is the only Verbena native to Illinois that has blue flowers. Its upright spikes of flowers aren't highly scented, but they attract a wide variety of pollinators. An excellent addition to rain gardens, because it doesn't mind standing water as long as it's temporary! Deer resistant.

Butterfly Weed

Asclepias tuberosa



Color: Bright Orange

Blooms: June - September

Mature Height: 2-3'

Mature Width: 2-4'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Dry-Mesic

Planting Tips: This showy, bright orange species of the milkweed family is a host for monarch butterfly larvae! It's large, showy clusters of flowers stand out in the garden, and look best when planted with other medium-height plant. After flowering, its large seed pods provide visual interest through fall. When fully dry seeds can be collected for planting. Will spread gradually once established.

Cardinal Flower

Lobelia cardinalis



Color: Red

Blooms: July - September

Mature Height: 2-4'

Mature Width: 1-2'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Moist-Mesic-Wet

Planting Tips: The large spikes of blooms on the Cardinal Flower are an impressive sight, particularly in mass plantings, borders, rain gardens, or naturalized in woodland gardens. They prefer moist soils, and a heavy mulching is helpful. Not truly perennial, but spread easily by seed and cuttings. Plant will often form its own offsets from the lowest leaves, resulting in a clumping growth pattern that “acts” perennial. Very attractive to hummingbirds!

Columbine

Aquilegia canadensis



Color: Red

Blooms: May-June

Mature Height: 2-3'

Mature Width: 1-2'

Sun Exposure: Partial Sun-Shade

Soil Moisture: Dry - Moist-Mesic

Planting Tips: Prefers soil that is loamy, rocky, or slightly sandy. Mature plants can also tolerate full sun, although young plants require some shade from neighboring vegetation. Once it becomes established, this plant is easy to maintain.

Bumblebees and the Ruby-Throated Hummingbird visit the flowers for nectar. Because the foliage is toxic, it is rarely bothered by deer.

Common Boneset

Eupatorium perfoliatum



Color: White

Blooms: July - September

Mature Height: 3-4'

Mature Width: 1-2'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Moist-Mesic-Wet

Planting Tips: Common Boneset has interesting foliage and fragrant flowers. The soil should contain considerable organic material so that it can retain moisture. This plant can withstand flooded conditions for short periods of time, but it is not really aquatic. The nectar or pollen of the flowers attracts many kinds of insects, including bees, flies, wasps, butterflies, and beetles. Mammalian herbivores display little interest in Common Boneset as a food source because of the bitterness of the foliage.

Common Ironweed

Vernonia fasciculata



Color: Purple

Blooms: July - September

Mature Height: 2-4'

Mature Width: 1.5-3'

Sun Exposure: Full Sun

Soil Moisture: Mesic-Wet

Planting Tips: Flowers are very attractive to butterflies! Ironweed tends to reseed readily and is effective at filling in backgrounds in borders and rain gardens! Remove flower heads before seed develops to avoid any unwanted self-seeding. The overall plant height may be reduced by cutting back stems in late spring.

Common Mountain Mint

Pycnanthemum virginianum



Color: White

Blooms: Summer

Mature Height: 2-3'

Mature Width: 2-4'

Sun Exposure: Full Sun

Soil Moisture: Moist Mesic-Dry Mesic

Planting Tips: The name 'Mountain Mint' is something of a misnomer, because this plant and other similar species in this genus do not usually occur in mountainous habitats. An easy plant to grow, mountain mint is not fussy about soil texture, and will readily grow in a variety of conditions. It attracts many pollinators, but is rarely bothered by deer and rabbits who don't seem to care for the "minty" foliage.

Cream Gentian

Gentiana flavida aka *Gentiana alba*



Color: Creamy White

Blooms: June - July

Mature Height: 1-2'

Mature Width: 2-3'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Mesic-Dry

Planting Tips: Starting plants from seed can be tricky, but transplants are much easier to manage. A yellowish appearance of the leaves is a common reaction to strong sunlight or dry weather, and does not necessarily signify disease or poor health. Bumblebees are the primary pollinators of the flowers, where they seek nectar. The flowers are not as closed as the Bottle Gentians, but less open than the Prairie Gentian. Cream Gentian also blooms about 3 weeks earlier than other gentians.

Great Bullrush

Scirpus validus (tabernaemontani)



Color: Dark Blue-Green Foliage, Reddish-Tan Umbrellas

Mature Height: 6-8'

Mature Width: 4-5'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Wet -Moist Mesic

Planting Tips: A classic wetland plant. Valuable for stabilizing pond and lake edges, restoring degraded wetlands, and for wildlife food and cover. Plants are often installed as groupings or mass plantings in wetland situations. Works well in companion plantings with Blue Flag Iris and Blue Vervain. This species seeds itself and can spread vigorously by rhizomes. Avoid planting in sites with limited space and vulnerable less aggressive companions.

Jacob's Ladder

Polemonium reptans



Color: Blue

Blooms: Spring

Mature Height: 10-24"

Mature Width: 12-24"

Sun Exposure: Partial Sun-Shade

Soil Moisture: Dry Mesic-Moist Mesic

Planting Tips: Naturally found in deciduous woodlands and shaded banks of streams and rivers, this plant is able to adapt to somewhat shady gardens that are located near deciduous trees. This is a rather floppy plant, although both the flowers and foliage are quite attractive. It is also an attractive plant to bees and butterflies!

Little Bluestem

Schizachyrium scoparium



Color: Bluish-Green to Reddish-Gold

Mature Height: 2-4'

Plant Spacing: 2'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Dry-Mesic

Planting Tips: Little bluestem is a colorful and easy-care addition to gardens. It gets its name from the bluish tint of new growth, which matures to a lovely reddish-gold color that's maintained through winter. Fluffy silver-white plumes add interest in late summer and fall, and are a nice addition to cut arrangements. Plant in clumps as a medium-height accent plant. Also works well in naturalized areas. Provides shelter and food for small animals and birds.

Marsh Blazingstar

Liatris spicata



Color: Purple

Blooms: Mid – Late Summer

Mature Height: 2-5'

Mature Width: 2-3'

Sun Exposure: Full Sun

Soil Moisture: Moist Mesic-Wet

Planting Tips: This member of the blazingstar family prefers damp soils with lots of organic material, but can readily adapt to other soil types in cultivation. It will spread through underground corms and develop a clustered colony after a few years. The attractive upright spike of flowers is very eye-catching, as well as being attractive to a variety of pollinators.

Marsh Marigold

Caltha palustris



Color: Yellow

Blooms: April-June

Mature Height: 1-1.5'

Mature Width: 1-1.5'

Sun Exposure: Full Sun – Part Shade

Soil Moisture: Wet

Planting Tips: This early bloomer is member of the buttercup family. It a great addition to rain gardens. Best flowering usually occurs in full sun, but plants appreciate some part shade in the heat of the summer. If they get too much sun and heat, they may go dormant over the summer. The nectar and pollen of the flowers attract primarily flies and bees. The foliage is relatively resistant to herbivores, although the seeds are sometimes eaten by small mammals.

Marsh Milkweed

Asclepias incarnata



Color: Deep Pink to Mauve

Blooms: Summer

Mature Height: 3-4'

Mature Width: 2-3'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Moist Mesic-Wet

Planting Tips: This member of the milkweed family prefers damp, loamy or clay soils with lots of decaying organic material. It'll tolerate wet areas and doesn't mind occasional standing water, as long as it's temporary. It has a bunch growth habit, and its rapid growth rate allows it to fill in quickly in the landscape. The flowers have a pleasant fragrance, almost like cinnamon. Attracts pollinators, deer resistant.

New England Aster

Aster novae-angliae



Color: Purple

Blooms: August - September

Mature Height: 3-6'

Mature Width: 2-3'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Mesic – Wet Mesic

Planting Tips: This plant has attractive flowers with a long blooming period. Pinching back stems several times before mid-July will help control plant height, promote bushiness and perhaps obviate the need for staking. Pinching back will also delay flowering. Cut back after flowering if self-seeding isn't desired and/or if foliage has become "messy." The flowers are visited regularly by pollinating insects.

Prairie Blazingstar

Liatris pycnostachya



Color: Rosey to Lilac Purple

Blooms: July - August

Mature Height: 2-5'

Mature Width: 1-2'

Sun Exposure: Full Sun

Soil Moisture: Mesic-Dry

Planting Tips: Established plants tolerate poor soils, drought, summer heat and humidity, but seedlings and transplants are vulnerable. In diverse prairies, taller, sturdy plants help support the flowers. In a garden or landscape setting, flowers may need staking. It will spread through underground corms and develop a clustered colony after a few years. Intolerant of wet soils in winter. Sometimes treated as a biennial. The flowers are pollinated primarily by long-tongued bees, butterflies, and skippers.

Prairie Coreopsis

Coreopsis palmata



Color: Yellow

Blooms: June - July

Mature Height: 2-5'

Mature Width: 2-3'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Mesic-Dry

Planting Tips: The densely spaced, bright, showy yellow flowers of prairie coreopsis are a striking addition to any garden. Once established, this plant loves to be neglected! Excellent drought tolerance! The mostly upright plant will spread via rhizomes and seeds, and looks lovely when allowed to form clonal colonies. Excellent for pollinators, particularly bees. Plant with butterfly weed for a lovely mix of sunny bright colors!

Prairie Milkweed

Asclepias sullivanti



Color: Pink

Blooms: June-July

Mature Height: 2-3'

Mature Width: 1-1.5'

Sun Exposure: Full Sun

Soil Moisture: Mesic-Wet

Planting Tips: While it can spread by means of its rhizomes, this plant is far less aggressive than Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*). May self-seed in the landscape if seed pods are not removed prior to splitting open. Flowers are a nectar source for many insects and leaves are a food source for monarch butterfly larvae (caterpillars). Because the foliage of Prairie Milkweed contains a white latex that is bitter-tasting and toxic to mammals, deer and rabbits avoid it!

Prairie Smoke

Geum triflorum



Color: Pink

Blooms: Spring-Early Summer

Mature Height: 8-12"

Mature Width: 1-6'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Dry Mesic-Mesic

Planting Tips: Native to northern Illinois' sand prairies, the fruiting stage of Prairie Smoke wins admirers at first sight. Large stands of this short plant create an effect that resembles smoke hovering close to the ground. Prefers soil that is rocky, gravelly, or sandy. Young plants should be kept well-watered during hot summer weather as Prairie Smoke is adapted to a somewhat cool northern climate.

Royal Catchfly

Silene regia



Color: Red

Blooms: Mid-Late Summer

Mature Height: 2-4'

Mature Width: 1-2'

Sun Exposure: Full Sun

Soil Moisture: Dry-Mesic

Planting Tips: Royal Catchfly is a rare plant that has endangered status in Illinois, although it is fairly easy to grow. Plants begin to bloom while small in size, but it takes several years to reach their full potential. The long, narrow flowers attract butterflies as pollinators.

Wild Bergamot

Monarda fistulosa



Color: Lilac Purple

Blooms: July - August

Mature Height: 2-4'

Mature Width: 2-5'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Dry-Moist Mesic

Planting Tips: A very adaptable plant, Wild Bergamot can grow nearly anywhere! This flower is actually a member of the mint family, and has a pleasant herbal aroma. Also known as bee balm, it really does draw in the bees! The pale, lilac purple blooms are a lovely complement to yellow coneflowers in naturalized plantings. It also grows well in mass plantings.

Wild Geranium

Geranium maculatum



Color: Pink to Lilac

Blooms: April-May

Mature Height: 1.5-2'

Mature Width: 1-1.5'

Sun Exposure: Shade-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Moist Mesic-Dry

Planting Tips: Mostly found in woodlands in the wild. Prefers moist, humus-rich soils, but can tolerate poor soils and some dry spells. May need supplemental water in sunnier areas. Can spread via rhizomes to form a “clumping” growth pattern and will naturalize in optimum growing conditions. Wild Geranium has a unique way of spreading its seeds. Each seed is packed into a pod and the pods are attached to a structure that resembles a crane's bill. As the bill dries, it literally catapults the seeds away from the parent plant!

Yellow Coneflower

Ratibida pinnata



Color: Yellow

Blooms: July - August

Mature Height: 3-6'

Mature Width: 2-4'

Sun Exposure: Full-Partial Sun

Soil Moisture: Dry Mesic-Mesic

Planting Tips: A relatively tall specimen, yellow coneflower works well in naturalized plantings with other wildflowers such as Wild Bergamot and with grasses such as Little Bluestem. It is drought tolerant, easy to grow, and easy to transplant. Bees are drawn to the flowers, and some birds such as gold-finches eat the seeds.