



NATIVE PLANT NOTES 2026

by Julie Beckford

Our definition of “native” is: the plant was growing in Central or Eastern North America prior to European contact. This definition has important ecological significance. The information provided here comes from various sources including *Growing and Propagating Wildflowers* by William Cullina, *Flora Novae Angliae* by Arthur Haines, *Bringing Nature Home* and *Nature's Best Hope* by Douglas Tallamy, organizations including Native Plant Trust and Wild Seed Project, and thirty-five years of personal experience.

In a time of profound ecological disturbance, it could not be more important to fill our landscapes with native plants.

Achillea millefolium (White Yarrow) 1-2'/white/June-October MAINE

sun to part sun; moist to dry

White yarrow has humbled us. I was taught many years ago that it is a European plant brought over by European colonizers. So even though I liked the plant for its beauty, toughness, and medicine, I held back on my affection. Western botanists have now corrected their mistake – the white yarrow here is “our” North American white yarrow; European white yarrow is similar but a different species. My affection pours forth. Lessons are available here, but in this document I'll stick to celebrating the plant itself. Yarrow shows up around the yard like violets do. The pure white umbel glows above the feathery, vibrant green leaves. It's a good and reliable friend. If it gets mowed it blooms later. Yarrow pushes up through disturbance, appearing on the edge of a compacted part of the yard, at your doorstep, or on the edge of your gravel driveway in addition to the middle of your lawn or field. It is a foundational herbal medicine. I now have no reservations about loving this plant, and when I see it in pristine wild places, like on Little Moose Island or in Baxter State Park, I smile instead of wince.

Agastache foeniculum (Anise Hyssop) 2-3'/purple spike/August-September

sun to part sun; moist to dry

There are so many good things about this prairie plant. It makes a delicious tea with fresh or dried leaves and flowers. The flowers themselves are really pretty and very attractive to bees and butterflies. The heart-shaped leaves, when young, have a beautiful purple hue. Easy to grow, seeds in, nice companion to *Rudbeckia fulgida*. Don't confuse this with the European medicinal, hyssop, which is *Hyssopus officinalis*. Anise hyssop is not "hyssop." (confusion is everywhere)

Ageratina altissima (White Snakeroot) 2-4'/white umbel/late summer-fall MAINE

sun to light shade; moist to dry

Super easy to grow (like violets), fall composite, disk flowers only (no rays like a daisy has). If you like to let things just become a part of your place, seeding in and finding their way around, this is a good choice. This plant can grow in lots of different conditions. I've seen it in the wild in dry, open woods, but on our land in Clifton (where we used to live) it settled in along our shady, damp driveway.

Allium schoenoprasum (Chives) 10-16"/purple/spring MAINE

sun; moist to dry

When I saw this "ordinary, ho-hum" plant growing in the cracks of rocks along the St. John River, I just about fell over with delight. Here it was in its original home. It hadn't jumped from gardens to river; it had been moved from river to gardens. Chives is a circumboreal wildflower and I'm so glad to have seen it in its homeland, which, in this case, was an ice-scoured river edge.

Alnus incana (Speckled Alder) up to 15'/early spring MAINE

sun to part sun; moist to wet

No matter where I lived in Maine, if I had suitable conditions on land under my stewardship I would create (or protect if it was already there) a willow-alder thicket. Because I have steadily, every fall, worked to remove invasive multiflora rose from our land, I have become intimate with alder and willow. Head down, focused, clipping away at the menacing rose branches, the speckled alder and grooved willow trunks surround me with their companionship and show me in a close up way the marvel of their ability to bounce back from major branch-breaking events like the heavy snowfall of April 2020. But even as an individual shrub in a more managed situation, speckled alder is a beauty. The elongation of the pollen-bearing catkins are one of the first signs of spring. Everything about the plant is beautiful, and meaningful to wildlife, and you can cut it back however you want to keep it the height and shape that looks right to you. Birds love alder as a sturdy landing place and as a seed source. This past fall a three-year old and I had fun plucking seed cones off a nearby shrub and tapping them on the picnic table. Many, many seeds fell out and we wondered who would find them and feast.

Amsonia tabernaemontana (Texas or Common Bluestar) 3'/blue/June

sun to light shade; moist to dry

This plant is unbelievably rugged, robust, and gorgeous. At the south end of the Belfast Co-op street-side garden it has held its own for many years, putting up its perfectly rounded form of many small blue flowers in June, even after it got run over repeatedly one winter.

Anemone canadensis (Meadow Anemone) 2'/white/spring MAINE

sun or shade; moist to dry

This is a beautiful spring wildflower, but do not put it where you do not want it to spread. With enough sun, it blooms profusely and does a perfect job filling in a place, say, between a garage and a mowed area. In the wild it mingles with other plants, but in gardens it just takes off. In the co-op garden it does a good job filling in around taller, robust individual plants like Amsonia.

Antennaria neglecta (Field Pussytoes) 6-12"/white/early spring MAINE

full sun; well-drained

There is information about this species in the following entry, so let me just describe my favorite sighting of this humble, yet powerful, little wildflower. In Montville, an entrance to a gravel driveway is graced by a rocky outcrop on the right and a healthy stand of young adult oak trees on the left. At the top of the moss-covered outcrop, the vibrant green lowest branch of a small fir tree reaches across to the upper edge of a swath of field pussytoes that then spill their white blossoms over the shoulder of the outcrop, ending where the slope of the rock becomes too steep to support any plant. This scene was to my right when I first approached it by car – rock, fir, pussytoes, backdropped by lichen-covered oak trunks. Perfect beauty, free of charge. Even in more ho-hum circumstances, this very early wildflower thrills us when it blooms because we've gone without for so long and it brings such relief.

Antennaria plantaginifolia (Plantain-leaved Pussytoes) 12-18"/white/early spring MAINE

full sun; well-drained

What a gem of a plant! I noticed a big patch of this mat-forming wildflower last spring on a steep, gravelly, south-facing roadside slope and was impressed by its erosion-control function in addition to its beauty. A friend and I collected seed later in the summer. Of the two species we grow, this one is taller, has a broader leaf and a pinker hue, and blooms a little later. Pussytoes bring early spring cheer and have appealing, fuzzy soft foliage. They can certainly be used in many interesting garden situations, but I think of them in the diversify-your-lawn category. Bring them into your yard and let them do what they will.

Aquilegia canadensis (Native Columbine) 2'/yellow and red/late May to early July MAINE

sun to light shade; well-drained

Unlike the European columbines, this one likes sun and can take it hot and dry like up on Mount Agamenticus. It can also thrive in quite a bit of shade like at the Damariscotta shell middens in the woods along the stream. It grows well in ordinary garden conditions and is its lovely, columbine self, but this is the striking red and yellow one.

Aronia melanocarpa (Black Chokeberry) 3-6'/white flowers/blooms in spring MAINE
sun; moist to dry

This shrub belongs to the blueberry barren native plant community. We have come to love it since we moved to Liberty where we live in the middle of an unimproved blueberry field. It's an early bloomer for bees; the flowers have a gorgeous touch of pink; the fall foliage colors are splendid. In commercial blueberry fields it is a bother – rakers try to avoid the hard, unpalatable fruits- but in our non-commercial field we and the bees just get to love it. In spite of the unpalatability of the almost-black fruits, the juice is a super food. I make it in September, drink it, and feel the surge. (see Ancestral Plants vol.2 by Arthur Haines.)

Aruncus dioicus (Goatsbeard) 3-6'/creamy white/spring-summer
part sun to shade; moist

You might as well think of this as a shrub because in spite of it being non-woody and dying back to its crown and roots each year, it becomes big and shrubby by June, putting out lots of creamy, yellowish-white plumes that feed zillions of pollinators. Seeds in readily and can take very moist shade although it doesn't require it. In the Belfast Co-op garden it blooms at the same time as Amsonia in full sun and they look great near each other.

Asclepias incarnata (Swamp Milkweed) 2-4'/rose pink/summer MAINE
sun, part shade; moist to wet

Many people are choosing this milkweed now because it is beautiful, it hosts the monarch caterpillar (like all Asclepias), and it doesn't spread. However, if you only grow one or two of them, and a monarch butterfly lays a few eggs on them, they may get devoured by the hungry caterpillars. Personally, I would grow common milkweed somewhere on my land where it can spread, put a few swamp milkweeds in a more tended garden for their special beauty, and, if I were lucky enough to get caterpillars on them, I could move them to the nearby patch of common milkweed (which is also beautiful, btw).

Asclepias syriaca (Common Milkweed) 2-4'/pink and green/early summer-fall MAINE
sun, part sun; moist to dry

Some people roll their eyes (or worse) at us for selling this plant because it is so common in the wild and it spreads. But many urban and suburban gardeners are thrilled that we make it available because their ecologically denuded landscapes need it in order for monarch butterflies to complete their life cycle. It is not difficult to supply the butterflies with nectar, but you have to grow milkweed in order for the caterpillars to have something to eat. Like many caterpillars, monarchs are specialists, and their specialty is milkweed. Monarch caterpillars' relationship to milkweed has become the symbol of the importance of growing a wide variety of native plants in your home garden in order to meet the needs of native insects who in turn support so much other wildlife.

Asclepias tuberosa (Butterfly Weed) 2'/orange/late summer-fall
sun; well-drained

Like the other milkweeds, Butterfly Weed is very late to emerge. This deep orange milkweed blooms the same time as *Salvia azurea* (Blue Sage) and the combo is eye-popping. It's fun to grow as many milkweeds as possible just to appreciate the various expressions of milkweed's complex architecture. This one is native to New England but not to Maine. The slender, dark-hued pods of this plant are striking. These one-year-old plants will be small in June and bloom large in September.

Baptisia alba (White Wild Indigo) 3'/white/June
sun, part sun; moist to dry
Similar to below but white.

Baptisia australis (False Indigo) 3-4'/indigo blue/June
sun, part sun; moist to dry

Stately, easy to grow, extremely hardy. After a couple of years, a single plant turns into a many-stemmed, overall vase-shaped show of lupine-like blossoms.

Caltha palustris (Marsh Marigold) 1'/buttery yellow/early spring-summer MAINE
sun to part sun; moist to wet

This early bloomer brings abundant cheer growing in wet places along streams or in ravines, throwing its bright yellow out to all passersby. It is one of spring's harbingers and if you have a wet area, go for it. Excellent pollinator plant, especially for a certain small fly whose name I do not know. It just finds *Caltha* every year and settles in. These one-year-olds, from seed, are relatively small.

Campanula rotundifolia (Harebell) 8-14"/blue violet/summer MAINE
sun to light shade; moist to dry

This lovely small bellflower appears delicate but is amazingly rugged, thriving in very exposed places like Schoodic Point in Acadia National Park. In nature it loves rocks and sun and wind. In a more fertile garden it has a lusher look with a denser cluster of blossoms. In either case, it is just the sweetest thing imaginable.

Campanulastrum americanum (Tall or American Bellflower) 4-6'/blue/summer
sun to light shade; moist to dry
biennial; delphinium-like

Campanulastrum seeds in and delights wherever it ends up blooming. There is no prettier wildflower.

Capnoides sempervirens (Rock-harlequin or Pink Corydalis) 1-3'/pink yellow/June-July MAINE
sun to part sun; average to dry

This pastel, dainty-looking wildflower that grows on granite boulders in the woods of Maine takes on a different personality in the garden. Still biennial, still loose and light, but with more nutrients it fills out (and in) and manages to make a real statement. Related to and with similar flower type and foliage as native bleeding heart, but looser, less tidy, and pastel all the way. It belongs on or next to rocks.

Cassia hebecarpa (Northern Wild Senna) 3-5'/yellow/August-September
sun; moist to dry

I have seen this growing lushly along I-495 in Massachusetts. Amazing! It can take it hot and dry once it's established but its look is fresh and full with pea family foliage and yellow flowers accented with brown anthers. Very slow to emerge, this is a "sleep, creep, leap" perennial that ends up shrub-like.

Ceanothus americanus (New Jersey Tea) 2-3' shrub/white/summer MAINE
sun to part sun; well-drained and acidic

We started these shrubs from seed so they will be small and priced the same as all of our other plants. This is an inexpensive way to get a great native shrub. New Jersey Tea is barely native to Maine, more common south of Maine. It blooms in summer and hosts hordes of pollinators. We'll have more to say about this shrub as we get to know it better. Landscapers rave about it.

Chelone glabra (White Turtlehead) 2-3'/white/late summer to fall MAINE
sun to part sun; moist to wet

Watching a bumblebee crawl into a turtlehead flower and disappear, as if it is climbing into a sleeping bag, is reason enough to grow this plant in a wet part of your garden. We collect the seed from a roadside patch in Orland and from a backyard wet thicket in Bucksport. The individual flowers coming off the central stem are big and showy, popping out, visually, from surrounding goldenrods and asters in September. Spreads rhizomally.

Chamaenerion angustifolium (Fireweed) 2-4'/pink/summer MAINE
sun, part sun; moist

On Route 3 between Liberty and Belfast there is a big patch of this spilling away from the side of an old barn and I'm always struck by the beauty of the scene and so relieved that I'm not looking at purple loosestrife! (similar color and overall shape from a distance) Fireweed finds disturbed areas where it can take off, spreading both rhizomally and by seed. Better for a wilder part of your place.

Clematis virginiana (Virgin's Bower) vining/white/early August MAINE

part sun/moist to wet

I love this plant. It climbs and adorns without smothering or choking. On our land, just as the black elderberry blossoms fade and set fruit, but before the fruit turns purple, the intertwined Clematis gives the shrub a fresh sparkle of small, white, delicate flowers. The native shrubs have finished flowering; Clematis, their friend, is the final touch. But more impactful, visually, is the persistent, creamy white, fluffy seed heads that give us something to look at when things have become pretty drab. Sometimes the cottony seed heads, with the brown seeds embedded within, are clumped together and become capable of holding quite a bit of snow, making them extra conspicuous in a pleasing, January, sort of way. :)

Coreopsis tripteris (Tall Coreopsis) 3-8'/light to medium yellow/late summer into fall

sun, part sun; moist to wet

If you have a wet, sunny area, plant this with other tall, or tallish, companions. If you don't want lots of seedlings, remember to deadhead it.

Dicentra eximia (Wild Bleeding Heart) 12-18"/pink/continuous bloomer from mid-spring on

sun to shade; moist

You will appreciate the repeating freshness of this plant as it puts out flushes of new growth, foliage and flowers, all summer long. This is one of our eastern North American woodland, ant-dispersed plants, like bloodroot, trillium, and Celandine poppy. Ants haul away the seeds in order to feed on the attached fatty structures called elaiosomes (that look like little larvae - yum). The seeds themselves get dumped on the midden piles. One of the million marvels...

Doellingeria umbellata (Flat-topped White Aster) 3-4'/white/Sept-Oct MAINE

sun, part sun; moist

Our affection for this plant grows and grows. It is common roadside, so if you manage wild fields, you don't need this. But if you are looking to re-wild a place, put this way up on your list. Its beauty lasts a long time in the fall because the lovely white composite flowers with yellow centers give way to surprisingly white seed heads that last a long time and brighten up a place that has otherwise become November brown. The gorgeous fall foliage of chokeberry (Aronia) surrounds a big pool of this white aster in our field and the combination in October and into November is a nature highlight.

Echinacea pallida (Pale Purple Coneflower) 2-3'/pale purple/summer

sun-part shade; drought tolerant; friend of butterflies; seeds in

An interesting coneflower. While breeders try to create neon coneflowers that look like strange daisies, Echinacea pallida proudly goes its natural way. It distinguishes itself with thin, pale petals that droop almost straight down. The stalk is stiff and hairy; the leaves are narrow. The roots go very deep and serve the plant well in dry summers.

Echinacea paradoxa (Yellow Coneflower) 3-4'/yellow/summer
sun; well-drained

I probably won't ever see this in the wild - it grows in a few pockets in the Ozarks – but one customer at the FEDCO tree sale way back when enjoyed telling me about seeing it there. This is a yellow Echinacea with thin, wavy petals. It prefers a leaner soil than the more common Echinacea purpurea.

Echinacea purpurea (Purple Coneflower) 3-4'/dark, rosy pink/summer
sun; moist

We grow and sell wild strain purple coneflower. The weird-looking so-called Echinaceas that are showing up in nurseries and gardens, with names like 'Cheyenne Spirit', 'Green Twister', 'Tiki Torch', and 'Pow Wow Wild Berry' are highly bred cultivars or hybrids that offend our senses. Our Rebel Hill Farm offering is the true wildflower, a classic garden perennial and well-known medicinal, gifted to us from the prairie.

Echinacea tennesseensis (Tennessee Coneflower) 12-24"/bright pink/summer
sun; well-drained

This species is endangered in the wild. In the garden it stands out because of its vibrant pink color and thinner, erect petals. Stunning in a bouquet, but of course it's easier for us to pick these gorgeous flowers because our production gardens afford us the bounty.

Eupatorium perfoliatum (Boneset) 2-4'/white/late summer-fall MAINE
sun to part sun; moist to wet

We most often see this on lake edges and such, but I've also seen it on the edge of a gravel pit in almost pure sand. (There's a lot we don't know.) As a gardener, think of boneset as one of the sunny, wet meadow plants; if you live on a lake, boneset is your friend. The sturdy foliage is part of its beauty.

Eurybia divaricata (White Wood-Aster) 1-2'/white/fall MAINE
sun to shade; moist to dry

This plant is new to us. We grew it out from seed we purchased from Wild Seed Project. Its habitat is deciduous woods and in Maine it is restricted to the southern part of the state (at least for now). Bill Cullina says it seeds in almost aggressively, so deadhead it if you don't want it to proliferate. It puts out lots of small white flowers and grows in lots of different conditions.

Eurybia macrophylla (Big-leaved Aster) 6-30"/light violet/fall MAINE
part sun to shade; moist

Big-leaved Aster is more about leaves than flowers. It's a great groundcover around oaks or pines or apple trees, forming a nice, dense mat of big, heart-shaped leaves. There's even a nice patch of it in the middle of our field in full sun. It flowers if it gets enough sun, but to us its strongpoint is how well it covers the ground in shady places. Very much at home in Maine (as opposed to some "Maine native" plants that are barely here.)

Euthamia graminifolia (Grass-leaved Goldenrod) 2-4'/yellow/September MAINE

sun to part sun; moist

Like Canada goldenrod, this spreads enthusiastically by its roots, so use it accordingly. It is common in the wild and an excellent plant for pollinators. I wouldn't try to use this in a formal garden, but if you need a deprived part of your land to become ecologically interesting quickly, here you go. The flowers are golden yellow and present as a flat top – a very easy landing pad for bees and butterflies.

Eutrochium dubium (Three-nerved Joe-Pye Weed) 3-4'/mauve/August MAINE

sun to part sun; moist to wet

Less common in Maine than Spotted Joe-Pye and as a garden plant, maybe a little shorter.

Eutrochium fistulosum (Hollow-stemmed Joe-Pye Weed) 5-8'/mauve/August-September MAINE

sun to part sun/moist to wet

This is the tallest Joe-Pye and sometimes it really goes for it. There is one in our production garden that we marvel at year after year; it is such a stunning, towering beauty.

Eutrochium maculatum (Spotted Joe-Pye Weed) 3-5'/mauve/August MAINE

sun to part sun; moist to wet

Be on the lookout for this beautiful wildflower as you drive by wet places in late summer. It always seems to be in patches that are big enough to catch your eye. In your garden this does fine in moist soil. It doesn't need to be wet.

Eutrochium purpureum (Sweet Joe-Pye Weed) 3-8'/a different mauve/August

sun to part sun; moist

Taller and a different color than Spotted Joe-Pye but not in a way I can describe as I sit here in February.

Filipendula rubra (Queen of the Prairie) 6-8'/pink/July

sun to part sun; moist to wet

Spreads rhizomally, looking for sunshine. Big, showy flower heads, the individual flowers maturing from the bottom up, so there are tight buds up top and pink poof below. If only I could see this in a tallgrass prairie where it belongs...

Fragaria virginiana (Wild Strawberry) 6"/white/spring MAINE

sun; moist to dry

An early blooming member of our "unimproved" blueberry field. Important to bees. Sweet to have around. :) Trails down rock walls. In rich soil this can become an impressive groundcover.

Geum rivale (Water Avens) 1-2'/maroon and green/June MAINE

sun to part sun/moist to wet

I have fresh affection for this plant because I have finally seen it in its glory. Up until last year, the only part of the plant I ever saw in the wild was the ground hugging foliage on the forest floor where I work on invasive removal in the fall. It doesn't seem like it blooms in the shade of the wet woods. Finally, last June, I was on a back road in Palermo and I noticed a distant patch of maroon in a wet meadow by Bowler Pond. Wondering what it was, I pulled over and walked through a very wet meadow to get to the patch. Oh my goodness, a big patch of *Geum rivale* in full bloom. Absolutely gorgeous. (See photo gallery) Unfortunately, the meadow got mowed before I could collect seed. The same thing happened to a beautiful patch of white turtlehead that was in a wet thicket of wildflowers near a cemetery in Liberty. I hope to build relationships with these land stewards so I can ask them to mow later in the season. But the *Geum* will be back and I can't wait to see it!

Helenium autumnale (Sneezeweed, except that is isn't) 4'/yellow/late summer to fall MAINE

sun; moist to wet

This is a lovely member of the fall composites and I was thrilled and surprised to see it growing in the intertidal zone of the Penobscot River in Bangor during the American Folk Festival.

Helianthus giganteous (Giant Sunflower or Swamp Sunflower) 6-10'/yellow/fall

sun to part sun; moist to wet

This is the native sunflower to choose for low, damp, sunny places. It spreads rhizomally but not aggressively.

Helianthus mollis (Downy Sunflower) 5'/yellow/August-Sept

sun; dry

Slowly patch-forming, more compact and sturdy, drought-tolerant; very downy foliage, relatively short. Another star of the Belfast Coop garden, this plant is so different than the other perennial sunflowers.

Helianthus tuberosa (Jerusalem Artichoke) 7'/yellow/fall MAINE

sun; moist

A valuable source of food (the tuber) in addition to its friendly, sunflower self. Put it where you want it to spread, because it will. Personally, as long as I have access to land, I wouldn't live without Jerusalem artichokes and nettles as perennial food sources.

Heliopsis helianthoides (Early Sunflower) 3-5'/golden yellow/summer

sun to part sun; moist to dry

Extremely easy to grow, sturdy, clump-forming, showy; seeds in.

Hieracium kalmii (Kalm's Hawkweed) 18"/yellow/late summer MAINE
sun to part sun/well-drained

Of the nine species of hawkweed described in The Plants of Acadia National Park, only three are native, and we propagate two of them. Kalm's Hawkweed is a peaceful member of our blueberry field's native plant community, growing here and there, offering its beautiful yellow, just being a part of our place. I like seeing it on my short walk through the field to the driveway.

Hieracium paniculatum (Panicked Hawkweed) 18"/yellow/late summer MAINE
part sun/well-drained

Driving slowly on a gravel road every day in every summer, it took me seven years to notice this plant. That's how conspicuous it isn't, because all I do on that one mile drive is look at plants and birds. Once I noticed it and figured out what it was, I was so happy, both to learn another native plant and to observe a feature that is new to me in the plant world. Each small yellow flower head is on a branch so fine that it looks as if the flowers are suspended in midair. It's a magic trick. Daytime fireflies. So consider this plant if you have the right conditions. Panicked hawkweed grows with blue-stemmed goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*) and big-leaved aster (*Eurybia macrophylla*) at the dry, rocky oak forest edge where I have finally noticed it.

Hypericum punctatum (Spotted St. Johnswort) 1-3'/yellow/summer MAINE
sun; moist

Many of us are familiar with Common St. Johnswort, *Hypericum perforatum*, a European plant that is well-established in Maine. Grow Spotted St. Johnswort in a moist meadow setting simply to enjoy a Maine native species.

Iris hookeri (Beachhead Iris) 8-12"/violet blue/June MAINE
sun to part sun; moist
More compact than *Iris versicolor*.

Iris prismatica (Slender-leaved Iris) 12"/violet/early summer MAINE
sun to part shade; moist to wet

This Maine iris is more coastal than *Iris versicolor* and its slender leaves give it a more graceful appearance. The particular strain we have been propagating is a deeper violet than what you typically see in the wild.

Iris versicolor (Blue Flag Iris) 1-2'/blue violet/June MAINE
sun to light shade; moist to wet

This is more common in Maine, often seen in ditches and along the edge of open, wet areas.

Liatris aspera (Rough Blazing Star) 3-4'/pink/summer

sun to part sun; moist to dry

A button blazing star, meaning the flowers are clumped in distinct buttons along the stem. Just before the flowers open, the tightly-packed deep rose-colored buds surrounded by greenish-maroon bracts are exquisite, especially when you look at them with a hand lens.

Liatris novae-angliae (Northern Blazing Star) 2-3'/pink-purple/August MAINE

sun; moist to dry

It is worth an August trip to the Kennebunk Plains nature preserve (a five-minute drive from the highway) to see this globally rare plant in its glory. The vignette of northern blazing star, little bluestem grass blowing in the wind, and occasional clusters of bright yellow goldenrod, is stunning. This, like *L. aspera*, is a button blazing star.

Liatris spicata (Marsh Blazing Star) 3-6'/pink-purple/summer

sun to part sun; moist to wet

We only grow the wild strain Marsh Blazing Star which is taller, more open, and way more interesting than the compact industry cultivars. We have had winters in which voles ate every one of the tuberous *Liatris* roots. It's their favorite. Spring will tell...

Lobelia cardinalis (Cardinal Flower) 18-24'/the reddest red/August MAINE

sun to part sun; moist to wet

Hummingbird favorite. This knock-your-socks-off Maine wildflower is in its own league. What a special plant it must be to river paddlers.

Lobelia siphilitica (Great Blue Lobelia) 1-3'/a range of blues/July-Sept MAINE

sun to shade; moist to wet

If you're not a super formal gardener (ie., excessive weeder), this plant becomes part of your place like violets. Easy to grow, it seeds in, is a good nectar plant, and is especially pretty in September interspersed with goldenrod, a dance that happens all by itself. I wouldn't have a yard without it.

Lonicera canadensis (American Fly Honeysuckle) 3-4' shrub/light yellow/May MAINE

part shade; moist

I keep an eye out for the bright red fruit of our native honeysuckle in early July so I can collect seed. This lovely native woodland shrub leafs out well before most other wild plants so it's easy to spot in late April or early May as I drive around delivering plants. If I were a better record-keeper, I'd jot down the locations so I could go back in a couple of months and look for fruit. As it is, I just hope to luck out and notice the fruit in the sea of green that is the woods in July. Not the best business strategy, but there you have it. This is one of my very favorite plants, partly because it is the native one that continues to do its ecologically balanced thing while the invasive honeysuckles run rampant, but mostly because its incredibly early, freshest-of-fresh smooth green leaves are a harbinger of spring.

Monarda bradburiana (Bradbury's Bee Balm) 1-2'/light pink/June

sun to part sun; moist

Blooms earlier than the other bee balms and is way less likely to get powdery mildew. Colorful fall foliage. We are very fond of "brad."

Monarda didyma 'Panorama Mix' (Bee Balm) 4'/lavender or magenta or pink/summer

sun to light shade; moist

This old-fashioned cultivar of the classic bee balm is a mix of colors. You take what you get. It won't be red. This bee balm spreads and seeds in and buzzes with bees.

Monarda didyma 'Panorama Red' (Bee Balm) 4'/red/summer

sun to light shade; moist

We haven't been able to find a seed source for wild strain *Monarda didyma*, so this cultivar is our offering of red bee balm. Grow it for hummingbirds and beauty. This one also spreads and seeds in.

Monarda fistulosa (Sweet Leaf or Wild Bergamot) 3-4'/lavender/summer

sun to light shade; moist

Fritillary butterflies seem to feed on this bee balm species in particular. This robust bee balm forms a patch over time and is a lovely presence in any garden.

Monarda punctata (Horsemint, Dotted Mint) 2-3'/pale yellow, pink, green/late summer

sun, part sun; moist to dry, well-drained

You have to look at this plant close up to see that it is the same genus as the bee balms. The flowers are clearly bee balmish but the showiness of this plant is more in the colorful pink and green leafy bracts that subtend the pale yellow, dotted flowers. It's fun to grow different *Monardas*, and this one is really neat, but it is short-lived and we have not seen it seed in much, so consider it an adventure rather than an acquisition.

Morella caroliniensis (Northern Bayberry) 2-6' shrub/greenish/late spring MAINE

sun to part sun; wet to dry

We grow this shrub from collected seed and what we sell is small and inexpensive for a shrub. Bayberry has glistening leaves that I cannot resist running my hands through just to catch the splendid fragrance of this beautiful, iconic Maine shrub. In nature, bayberry grows in a wide range of conditions and is similarly adaptable for home landscapes. In the granite landscape of Acadia National Park, the fall foliage of huckleberry in all its shades of red interspersed with the glistening green of bayberry up on the mountain tops is one of our very favorite native shrub "vignettes."

Oenothera fruticosa (Sundrops) 1-2'/bright yellow/summer

sun to part shade; moist to dry

Sundrops spread to make a big show of summer yellow. Easy to grow.

Packera schweinitziana (New England Groundsel) 1-2'/bright yellow/early June MAINE
sun, part sun; moist to wet

New England Groundsel is an unsung hero. No one seems to want to buy “another yellow composite” from us, but let me persuade you. This June-blooming yellow composite has a personality all its own. On a daily basis I was driving right by it because it grows in a roadside ditch, sprinkled in with sensitive fern, very near our home. It kept catching my eye, though, because it was a strong, more punctuated yellow than any hawkweed lookalike, so I finally pulled over to take a closer look. “Hey! You're Packera! And you're growing right here by our corner!” It had been hiding in plain sight. Up close it is so beautiful – the deep yellow disc flowers encircled by the lighter yellow ray flowers throw a special cheer. Bring it to a ditch near you!

Parthenocissus quinquefolia (Virginia Creeper) trailing, climbing woody plant MAINE

Those of us who garden in semi-wild environments are forever cutting this plant back or ripping it out. But for those of us in ecologically parched urban or suburban landscapes, this is a fabulous plant to bring on board. The dark fruits are gorgeous against the spectacular fall foliage and this plant is a valuable larval host for native insects. Easy to grow, native to Maine, beautiful fall color, and ecologically important.

Penstemon digitalis (Foxglove Beardtongue) 24-30"/white/early summer MAINE
sun to light shade; moist

This is not one of my favorites but what do I know! I'm not a hummingbird or a bee! It's a white, foxglove-esque flower; it's easy to grow, seeds in readily, has nice, dark green foliage, and maybe I just haven't spent enough time around it. This is a garden regular, or “well-practiced” as Pete puts it. I'll probably rave about it next year.

Penstemon hirsutus (Northeastern Beardtongue) 8-14"/white & purple/early summer MAINE
sun, part sun; moist to dry

A baby hummingbird found a *Penstemon hirsutus* flowering stalk that had gotten bent over and had flowers lying on the clear ground of the garden aisle. I watched the tiny bird feed effortlessly on the nectar, and that secured my affection for this plant. (Mental filters already in place – *Penstemon hirsutus* is native and doesn't otherwise cause ecological problems.) This penstemon is shorter and more colorful than *P. digitalis*.

Penstemon pallidus (Eastern White Beardtongue) 18"/white/spring MAINE
sun to part sun; moist to dry

This penstemon is the first one to bloom and is shorter and more compact than *Penstemon digitalis*.

Phlox divaricata (Wild Blue Phlox) 12-16"/purplish blue/spring
part sun or shade; moist

Plant this in nice, rich soil in dappled shade, along with some celandine poppies, and enjoy the late May splendor. A little bit of Appalachian woodland in your yard. Ecologically speaking, we can borrow plants from south or west of Maine and still be operating within the web of life of Eastern North America. (*Silphium perfoliatum* is an exception to this general rule, as discussed under that entry.)

Plants from other continents are a different story. Wild blue phlox, which I first met in the rich woods of southern Michigan, is a fantastic garden plant, forming a patch of very pleasing foliage and then offering up a soothing presence of springtime purple-blue phlox blossoms.

Phlox stolonifera (Creeping Phlox) 6-8"/choose any of four colors/spring
part sun or shade; moist

We have never seen this in the wild but we know it well as a garden plant. We vegetatively propagate Blue Ridge, Pink Ridge, Bruce's White, and Fran's Purple, all named cultivars (as opposed to wild strain which has more genetic diversity). The flower stalks are emergent, rising six inches or so above the ground-hugging, broad-leaved foliage, so the effect is different from *Phlox divaricata*. Fast-spreading but not aggressive. Really nice mat-forming, colorful, lush groundcover in some shade.



The following are cultivars of the native *Phlox subulata*, or creeping phlox, often seen in cemeteries (especially the pink one). The blue one is the most lush and spreads the fastest. These are groundcovers and like to spill over rocks.

Phlox subulata 'Blue' 4-8"/light blue-lavender/spring

Phlox subulata 'White' 4-6"/white/spring

Phlox subulata 'Red' 4-6"/bright pink/spring

Physostegia virginiana (Obedient Plant) 3'/pale pink/Sept-Oct MAINE
sun to part sun; moderately dry to wet

Spreads rhizomally so much so that some people call it "Disobedient Plant." We do not think of it as a nuisance at all but it does spread, so keep that in mind. The tubular flowers and the pale pink color are both welcome contrasts to other fall bloomers.

Polemonium reptans (Jacob's Ladder) 1-2'/light blue/spring
part sun to light shade; moist

The common name is for the foliage, fittingly. The delicate, pale blue flowers bubble out of the low mound of beautiful foliage in a way that feels like an extra touch, free of charge.

Polygonatum biflorum (Smooth Solomon's Seal) 3-4'/white with green/May-June MAINE
sun to complete shade; moist to dry

Even though we list this as native to Maine, what we sell is not what you see when you run into smooth solomon's seal in Maine forests. We grow a large form of the plant that has been endlessly reproduced vegetatively and is now common in people's gardens. Botanists are still working this species out. They may conclude that this large form and the more common smaller form are distinct species. Regardless, this robust, extremely shade tolerant plant has a lot going for it. It spreads rhizomally to create an impressive stand. The elegant bell-shaped flowers, white with green tips, hang in pairs down the arched stem of the plant and are an early nectar source for newly arrived hummingbirds. In addition, this plant is valued by herbalists for the medicinal properties of the rhizomes.



All three of these native-to-Maine Pycnanthemums (Mountain Mints – not culinary) are highly recommended for pollinators. They're white, bloom late summer into fall, and teem with insect life. And they smell terrific, from April to October.

Pycnanthemum muticum (Blunt Mountain Mint) 3-4'/white to slightly violet/August MAINE
sun to part shade; moist

This species with its broad leaves needs more consistently moist conditions than the other two.

Pycnanthemum tenuifolium (Slender Mountain Mint) 12-18"/white/late summer-fall MAINE
sun to part sun; moist to dry

Thin leaves enable this plant to tolerate times of drier soil.

Pycnanthemum virginianum (Common Mountain Mint) 2-4'/white/late summer-fall MAINE
sun to part sun; moist

Leaves not as thin as Slender Mountain Mint, and this one is much taller.

Ratibida pinnata (Gray-headed Coneflower) 4'/light yellow with green to brown center/late summer

sun; moist to dry

One of our favorite composites. It is an open, airy plant with pleasing light yellow, long-petaled blossoms. In the summer of 2021 I had the pleasure of seeing this in the wild for the first time, near Lake Superior in Minnesota.

Rosa carolina (Pasture Rose) 2-3'/pink/June MAINE

sun; moist to dry

Seed collected from our land. This is the rose that occurs here and there in our fields. It gets mowed every other year and so we don't see it "unkempt." Our impression is that this rose is not as "brambly" as *Rosa virginiana*. It doesn't spread as fast or get as tall. The flowers are similarly rose-pretty and fragrant. The rose hips are the size of marbles and have their own beauty. Here in Maine, in the presence of coastally invasive *Rosa rugosa* and everywhere-invasive multiflora rose, I am particularly soothed by the presence of our native roses.

Rosa virginiana (Virginia Rose) 2-4'/pink/summer MAINE

sun; moist to dry

In the Belfast Co-op garden we've replaced the non-native *Rosa rugosa* with this native rose. It sprawls in a wild way and we cut it back a little bit so passersby don't trip over it. It is behaving just as we hoped it would, forming a mini thicket in an urban place with lovely pink roses and red rose hips, creating an oasis of shelter and food for insects and birds, as well as beauty and fragrance for human beings. All this without the ecological drawbacks of non-native species.

Rubus odoratus (Purple Flowering Raspberry) 3-5'/deep rose-purple/summer MAINE

sun or shade; moist to dry

A fantastic native shrub-like plant that is underused in home landscapes. It thrives in lots of different conditions forming a thicket over time that goldfinches and other birds love to fly in and out of. Bees love the showy flowers. This is a biennial shrub like red raspberry but it has no thorns and its fruit, while edible, is not as abundant or sweet. I've seen it thriving on the north side of old farmhouses as well as on south-facing urban banks.

Rudbeckia fulgida (Perennial Black-eyed Susan) 3'/yellow/summer into fall

sun; moist

This is wild strain, not a cultivar, and in our opinion is much prettier than the nursery cultivar that is too short and compact, too golden, and has completely lost its wildflower essence. This true *Rudbeckia fulgida* (as if the Latin name alone connotes its ancient nature) is a beautiful, airy but bushy wildflower that once housed a ground nest of hermit thrushes on our land in Clifton!

Rudbeckia laciniata (Wild Goldenglow) 4-7'/light yellow with green disk/summer MAINE

sun to part shade; moist

Old-fashioned farmhouse perennial that spreads, is tall, and establishes itself as a friendly fixture in your yard.

Salvia azurea (Blue Sage) 2-3'/blue/late summer-fall

sun; moist to somewhat dry

Gorgeous. Excellent nectar plant. In our garden it blooms the same time as *Asclepias tuberosa* and together they create color extravagance. Orange and blue don't go together in any other universe, as far as I know, but there is something about these two plants...

Sambucus nigra (Black Elderberry) up to 10' shrub/white/July MAINE

sun to part sun; moist to wet

Local seed, some from our land. I always appreciate this elderberry's place in the sequence of flowering shrubs. After many native shrubs have flowered and moved on, there's black elderberry in full bloom in July, making so many pollinators happy. And then the dark purple fruits – stunning and fecund and so good as jelly if you can get ahead of the birds. As I crawl around our hedgerow clipping out multiflora rose, I try hard not to break the fragile elderberry stems because I'm just so glad to have the shrub on our land. The native clematis is glad, too. It loves clambering over this shrub, and the combination of drooping clusters of dark purple, shiny elderberry fruits mixed with the white, fluffy, weightless seed heads of clematis is such a playful contrast, it makes me smile with delight every early fall.

Sambucus racemosa (Red Elderberry) up to 15' shrub/creamy white/May MAINE

sun to part shade; moist to dry

This is one of the earliest shrubs to bloom and to set its bright red fruits, making it an important member of the sequence of things according to bees and birds. Humans are also heartened by its early appearance. Near the Washington General Store, on my spring plant delivery route to the coast, a huge weeping willow stump created good germination ground for what became a gorgeous red elderberry shrub that I admire in both flower and fruit every year. The shrub has now passed its prime, but it's still there and alive and a good reminder of the interesting things that can go on in our front yards.

Sanguinaria canadensis (Bloodroot) 5-8"/white/early spring-summer MAINE

part sun, shade; moist

Nothing is more welcomed than this white flower bud poking up through the still rolled up leaf, suddenly unfolding and waving with all its might, "Hi! It's Spring!" Bloodroot is so perfect at this job that the brevity of its blooming time is completely forgivable. And besides, unlike some other spring ephemerals, the round, lobed leaves of bloodroot fan themselves out to form an awesome groundcover that lasts all summer long. Around July 1, find a seed pod down amongst the leaves, pick it, and open it up to see the shiny chestnut-colored seeds with their elaiosome ant food attachments. Let the seeds drop to the ground and see how long it takes ants to start hauling them off.

Schizachyrium scoparium (Little Bluestem) 2-3'/greenish purple then bronze in fall MAINE

full sun; well-drained

Little Bluestem, a grass, is native to Maine and widespread. It is a distinctive member of our non-commercial blueberry field, emerging later than other grasses and eventually becoming quite striking with bronze stems contrasting feathery bunches of little white hairs situated up and down the plant. We collected seed from our field and offer this lovely native grass for the first time.

Scutellaria lateriflora (Mad-dog Skullap) 8-12"/pale blue-purple/late summer MAINE

sun to part sun; moist to wet

Important to herbalists. Good for naturalizing in wet areas. Spreads by shallow white roots. Easy to divide.

Silphium perfoliatum (Cup Plant) *Can no longer be sold in Maine!*

This is a cautionary tale. Very rarely does an eastern or central North American plant get introduced to other parts of eastern North America and end up being invasive. Black locust is one species that has. Cup plant is now another. Remember, the ecological definition of "invasive" is a plant (or animal) outside its home range that proliferates in undisturbed areas and displaces native species. Native to Missouri, cup plant has been moved all over the place. In the Adirondacks, it jumped from a formal garden to the surrounding forest and now lines pristine rivers and streams where native plants once grew. It is much more likely that this would happen with a plant from another continent. But in this case, it is a Midwestern plant that behaves invasively in the Northeast. Until now, because we sell plants native to central or eastern North America, Pete and I have not worried about the potential invasiveness of our plants. Now all bets are off. Who's next? we wonder...

Our response to this, besides composting the cup plant that is in our production garden, is to focus more heavily on Maine natives. As the climate changes, some native-to-Maine plant species will diminish, some will expand, and some new species will come in from the south. All species are evolving in response to climate disturbance. The shifts in native plant community composition are not predictable and we're not going to try to "assist" this process; we are going to accompany it.

Smilacina racemosa (False Solomon's Seal) 1-3'/creamy white/spring MAINE

part sun to shade; moist

This forms some beautiful forest edge patches that arch away from the woods and catch my eye as I drive by. I really appreciate this Maine woodland plant for its overall form, its flower, and its beautiful fruit.



About goldenrods – If you live in rural Maine, you don't need to buy goldenrod plants. But if you live in a Scarborough housing development, you do. And before your neighbors tell you you're ruining the neighborhood, tell them this: Goldenrods are the most important non-woody plants for Maine's wildlife; they are insect pollinated (as opposed to wind-carried) and do not cause hay fever; they have great medicinal value; they are beautiful; and they have put the finishing touch on many Rebel Hill Farm bouquets that just “needed a little something.” Here are ten different Maine species to choose from, each with their own special attributes. (I'm not going to try to describe the different yellows, but they are different.)

Solidago bicolor (Silverrod) 1-3'/creamy white/Sept-Oct MAINE

sun to light shade; moist to dry

People are starting to catch onto this one as a great garden plant. Upright, creamy white, branching in a very vertical way. Just beautiful in the fall field when the blueberry and chokeberry leaves have turned red.

Solidago caesia (Blue-stemmed Goldenrod) 2-3'/yellow/fall MAINE

part sun; moist

This is one of Maine's two deciduous woodland goldenrods (*S. flexicaulis* is the other), so it's a good one to be aware of if you want goldenrod in a shadier spot. It blooms up the stem in the axils and the yellow flowers contrast with the dark blue-hued stems in a pleasing way.

Solidago flexicaulis (Zigzag Goldenrod) 1-3'/yellow/fall MAINE

sun or shade; moist to dry

This is a woodland goldenrod, happy amongst deciduous trees in rich soil. The stem zigzags, thus the name. Big leaves are sharply toothed. It's fun to run into this in the woods, like behind the Ellsworth Library along the Union River.

Solidago gigantea (Smooth Goldenrod) 3-6'/yellow/fall MAINE

sun to part sun; moist to wet

This is a later-blooming goldenrod and thrives in wetter ground. The flowering top flares out as it goes up – an upside down pyramid. It has a big presence and it spreads, so put it in a wet area that needs revitalizing.

Solidago juncea (Early Goldenrod) 3'/yellow/July MAINE

sun; moist to dry

The beginning of the goldenrod parade.

Solidago nemoralis (Gray Goldenrod) 1-2'/yellow/August into fall MAINE

sun; well-drained

Gently arching individuals grace our blueberry field.

Solidago puberula (Downy Goldenrod) 18-30"/yellow/September MAINE
sun; well-drained

Also, in our blueberry field, these are showier and upright.

Solidago rugosa (Rough-stemmed Goldenrod) 3-5'/yellow/August MAINE
sun to part sun; moist to dry

This one is my personal favorite. The lay of our land is such that when I walk down to our mailbox, or down our road, the adjacent hedgerow drops down to a small drainage and then up to our field. So I get to look down at the flowering tops of the hedgerow's perennials. *Solidago rugosa* is gorgeous from this perspective. It spreads rhizomally to form a dense patch and the flowering stems shoot out in all directions to create eye-catching splashes of yellow. Put it where you want it to spread.

Solidago sempervirens (Seaside Goldenrod) 1-3'/yellow/fall MAINE
sun to part sun; sandy, well-drained

Thick succulent-like leaves enable this to grow among rocks on the coast. Very showy.

Solidago ulmifolia (Elm-leaved Goldenrod) 3'/yellow/August-Sept MAINE
sun, part sun; moist to dry

A much fuller plant in both leaves and flowers than Early, Gray, or Downy, but less graceful.

Spiraea alba (Meadowsweet) 2-4'/white with a touch of pink/mid-summer MAINE
sun to part sun; moist to dry

This small shrub is all over the countryside in Maine. I wouldn't live without it in my yard because it blooms in mid-summer when the bees really need it. Besides that, it's really pretty at the bud and the flower stage and the overwintering dried up brown flower/fruit heads are aesthetic companions right into the following spring.

Spiraea tomentosa (Steeple-bush) 2-4'/rosy pink/August MAINE
sun to part sun; moist

In the fall of 2022 Pete and I were driving down a state road in eastern New York when we saw a sign for Edna St. Vincent Millay's farm, Steepletop. We took a quick left and drove up to the farm where a kind caretaker gave us permission to walk the land even though the whole place was closed to the public at that time. The land, a mix of fields and woods, was well cared for and gloriously beautiful. Between two large, mowed fields on high land that dropped away in all directions was a wide swath of land that was purposefully not mowed and was rich with native shrubs, including a very large, dense stand of steeple-bush. We were very struck by it because we typically see steeple-bush in the wild as single plants. "This must be why the place is named 'Steepletop!'" And come to find out, it is.

Steeple-bush, when encountered as a single plant, so narrow and upright, feels much more like a herbaceous perennial than the woody shrub that it is. And because it's way less common than our other native *Spiraea*, meadowsweet, we're always especially happy to see it. The form of the plant, topped by a dense, tapering spike of small, pink flowers, is true to its name.

Stylophorum diphyllum (Celandine Poppy) 12-18"/papery yellow/May-June
part sun to shade; moist

Celandine poppy is one of our favorites. If you live in a semi-wooded area this woodland plant can get moved around by ants, like bloodroot, and just start showing up here and there exuding pure delight with its showy yellow flowers. An individual plant can become quite substantial, putting out fresh blossoms over many weeks. In Clifton, one seeded in up against an old shed, took up residence, and knocked our socks off year after year. (This native plant gets confused with a Eurasian weed that is called "celandine.")

Swida racemosa (Swamp or Gray Dogwood) 3-6' shrub/white/June-July MAINE
sun to part shade; moist to wet

We have grown this out from seed collected on our land. This open, spreading shrub occupies a corner at the bottom of our driveway between the gravel, a big ash tree, and the paved road. The shrub and I have one date every fall as I crawl through it for an hour clipping back or pulling oriental bittersweet, multiflora rose, and Asian honeysuckle. If I did not intervene in this way, the native shrub would be overrun. We have also pointed it out to the local road crew so they don't cut it, and, thankfully, they tolerate our wishes. We feel particularly protective of this shrub since it's the only place we've seen it on our land.

This dogwood blooms after arrowwood and pagoda dogwood, but before elderberry. I, and the bees, appreciate its timing. The fruits start out white and turn partially blue. I call it "blueberries and cream", like the delicious John's Ice Cream flavor offered right down the road. This is a good edge-of-woods shrub that will sprawl if it can. Important to wildlife for its leaves (native caterpillars), flowers (many pollinators), and fruits (birds).

Swida sericea (Red Osier Dogwood) 3-8' shrub/white flowers, red twigs/spring MAINE
sun to light shade; moist to wet

Pete propagated this from cuttings. The stunning red twigs you see roadside in Maine is this shrub. Red osier dogwood spreads by stolons (like rhizomes but above ground) and it is the fresh growth that is knock-out red, so if you want the whole thing to stay red, cut it to the ground in late winter. Put this in a wilder part of your yard that is wet and sunny.

Symphotrichum cordifolium (Heart-leaved Aster) 2'/blue sprays/fall MAINE
sun to shade; moist to dry

Heart-leaved aster grows in lots of different places. As common as it is in rural Maine, if you live in a more developed area, we highly recommend bringing this into your yard, it is so valuable to insects and other wildlife. It's a backbone perennial, pretty, easy as heck to grow, and can do sun or shade.

Symphotrichum cordifolium 'Blue Lab' (Rebel Hill Farm variety of Heart-Leaved Aster)
MAINE

Twenty-five years ago, at our old farm in Clifton, Pete noticed a heart-leaved aster that had particularly large blossoms. He collected seed and has kept the lineage going. ("Lab" refers to an area in one of our original production gardens where a lot of waif and stray plants were given a chance to show us their potential.)

Symphotrichum laeve (Smooth Blue Aster) 1-3'/blue violet/fall MAINE

sun to part sun; moist to dry

In our opinion, this is the prettiest aster for both its larger flower and the visually soothing quality of its bluish green silky-smooth foliage.

Symphotrichum lateriflorum (Calico Aster) 1-3'/white with pale yellow & mauve/fall MAINE

sun to part shade; moist to wet

This aster with small flowers and small leaves is aptly named. The ray flowers (the outside ring) are white; the disc flowers (center) are yellow and a range of mauve/purple. Calico it is. This plant is common on the Maine landscape and you probably already have it if you have wildish land, but if your land needs to recover from sterilizing overmanagement, by all means...! Furthermore, if you look at this composite through a 10x hand lens, the colorful, packed mini-garden of ray and disc flowers will take your breath away.

Symphotrichum novae-angliae (New England Aster) 3-8'/purple or pink/fall MAINE

sun to part sun; moist to dry

Stately, the last aster to bloom, the last hurrah for bumblebees.

Symphotrichum puniceum (Purple-stemmed Aster) up to 6'/light violet/early fall MAINE

sun to part shade; moist to wet

In our hedgerow this grows down in the wettest places that are open enough to let in ample sunshine. This is a sturdy, erect plant with particularly large blossoms - a welcome presence in an area without much color otherwise.

Thalictrum pubescens (Tall Meadow Rue) 4-8'/white/summer MAINE

sun to shade; moist to wet

Tall Meadow Rue and I are friends. It grows here, there, and everywhere in the damper parts of our hedgerow, and in October and November when I cruise through this part of our land working on invasives, the persistent vibrant green of the seemingly delicate, lovely meadow rue foliage brings me great cheer. I would grow it just for its columbine-like foliage. One June day, many years ago, I noticed blooming yellow zizea growing in a sunny roadside ditch. I stopped to look at it and was quite struck by the beautiful, wild composition of zizea, tall meadow rue, and sensitive fern. It seemed like something worth trying to emulate.

Urtica dioica (Stinging Nettles) 1-3'/small greenish white/June MAINE

sun to shade; moist to wet

This species has two subspecies, only one of which is native to Maine. Their ecological role is so similar that we're willing to call this native to Maine even though we don't know which subspecies we have. Stinging nettles is a valuable larval host and a super nutritious food for humans. Yes, it stings, and it spreads, so place it accordingly. Our yearly nettle-mushroom-goat cheese quiche is a spring ritual. Nettles dry easily for year-round, mineral-rich tea, except for the wet year of 2023 when it lost its vibrancy on our drying racks before it ever dried.

Verbena hastata (Blue Vervain) 2-5'/blue violet/late summer into fall MAINE

sun to part sun; moist to wet

One of the wet meadow beauties. I like seeing this in roadside ditches. Seeds in readily. A native to Maine favorite.

Verbena stricta (Hoary Vervain) 2-3'/a different blue violet/late summer into fall

sun; moist to dry

Drought tolerant. Bigger blossoms than V. hastata but less elegant in its form. An excellent choice, though, if you want a Verbena that can handle drought, and Verbenas are really good pollinator plants.

Vernonia fasciculata (Smooth Ironweed) 3-5'/reddish purple/August into fall

sun; moist to wet

Not as tall and has a tighter flower head than the Vernonia below.

Vernonia noveboracensis (New York Ironweed) 5-9'/reddish purple/August into fall

sun; moist to wet

Tall and stately; surprisingly sturdy; open, airy flower head; unusual flower color in the plant world. This is one of our favorite fall composites. It's happy with other tall friends.

Veronicastrum virginicum (Culver's Root) 3-6'/white/mid- to late summer

sun; moist

Native to New England but not to Maine, this plant is striking for its long, narrow flowering tops and its overall upright posture. It is valued medicinally. For years we had a difficult time getting this seed to germinate, but after buying seed from The Wild Seed Project, we finally have it back.

Viola blanda (Sweet White Violet) 2-4"/white with purple lines on lower petal/spring MAINE

sun to shade; moist to wet

In nature this is found in cool, wet woods but it can become part of a diversified lawn or grow elsewhere in your gardens. We bought this seed and it germinated readily, so we're offering it and will have more to say about it in a few years.

Viola sororia 'Mix' (Dooryard Violet) 4-6'/white, red, or purple/May MAINE

sun to shade; moist

Why live without them? To me, violets seem especially tapped in to the human spirit. Put them in some moist place on your land and they will find their way. Some fritillary butterflies rely exclusively on violet leaves for their caterpillars' food, so violets are essential in a butterfly garden. Once you have an abundance of them you can put flowers and leaves in your spring salad or on a May birthday cake.

Zizia aurea (Golden Alexanders) 1-3'/bright yellow/June MAINE

sun to light shade; moist to wet

This is the only native plant we grow that is in the carrot family, making it important to black swallowtail butterflies for larval food. It has a divided leaf and a loose, open flower head of yellow umbels (Queen Anne's Lace is an umbel, also).