Maintenance Requirements for your Native Garden

Regular maintenance on your garden during the first year is critical for success. When freshly planted, the garden will need regular weeding and watering until the native plants become established. Care and watering is required as the plants do not yet have the roots in place to support themselves. In the second year the plants should require less watering, but, some slower growing species may still need the occasional drink. Weeding should also be kept up during the second year as the plants will spend most of their energy growing and expanding their roots. Only after the roots are established will the visible above ground plant grow and fill in. The establishment phase is usually about two years, but some weeding may be needed beyond that.

After the plants are fully established they will be much more resistant to drought and should not need any additional watering. They should fill in above ground and this will help shade out the weeds and keep them to a minimum. You should always be on the lookout for invasives and pull them out.

Using mulch is a good way to minimize weed growth and it will aid soil by retaining moisture and adding organic material.

TIP

Leave your leaves! When leaves fall in your garden, consider leaving them where they fall. They will add nutrients to the soil as they break down.

Other Habitat Features for your Garden

Water source: Water is one of the necessities of life, even for bees and butterflies. Not every yard needs a pond but there should be water available in every neighbourhood in some form (pond, birdbath or stream). Ponds are a great way to provide wildlife with water but check your local municipal bylaws before proceeding. Pondless water features are a nice alternative to ponds where a waterfall or fountain has flowing water that collects in a container out of sight.

Any water source for wildlife should be at or near ground level. Ideally they should be a shallow pool of water about two or three inches deep with a gentle slope into the water. This will be deep enough to bathe and drink from without being too deep for the birds or small mammals to get in and out. Waterfalls or fountains are great as the sound of running water will get the attention of wildlife. Be sure to clean the pool/dish/tray and replace the water in it regularly to prevent spread of disease or infection.

Mud Dish: Bees, insects and even some birds use mud to build their nests. To provide a constant source of mud consider placing a shallow dish of moist soil (less than 1cm deep) on the ground in your garden. To maintain soil moisture you will need to water your dish regularly or come up with a creative watering solution.

Bee Box: Providing our native bees with artificial nesting sites, like plant stem tunnels, or some bare ground is a good way to attract bees to your garden and increase the local population.

There are many design options for bee boxes that can be simple or elaborate. You can find more information at conservationhalton.ca/help-native-bees. Regardless of your design selection the box should be located in a sunny or partly shaded area of your yard. Having the openings facing south or east is best.

Note: Drilled out wooden blocks are not highly recommended as they can become infested with disease or mites and must be replaced yearly or biyearly.

Evergreen tree for winter birds: Evergreens are vital bird and wildlife habitat because of the shelter they provide from the cold winter winds. Consider planting one on your property if there isn't one on your street.

Other: There are many other types of habitat features you could add to your garden. These include:

- Bat Box
- Toad House
- Bird Feeder for winter
- Brush Pile
- Insect Hotel
- Leaving out fluff and yarn for nest construction

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planning your native landscape

Designing your Native Landscape

There are a few things to consider when you're designing your native landscape, such as the existing landscape conditions on your property and the surrounding neighbourhood. It is worth taking the time to sketch out your garden plans before planting to save time and money.

Sun Conditions: If your garden receives direct sunlight for either part of or all of the hours between 11am and 4pm you should consider full sun plants only. If your garden receives direct sunlight during the morning or in the evening you will want to consider part sun plants.

If your garden receives little to no sunlight, you will need to consider shade plants only. Shade plants are those which originate from forests. This guide does not provide any shade tolerant plant suggestions, a detailed list is available at conservationhalton.ca/optimize-garden-butterflies.

Soil & Moisture Conditions: If your garden will be located on sandy soils without regular watering you will want to select drought tolerant plants. If your garden will be on soils that hold water, or is located near downspouts, you can select moisture tolerant plants.

Aesthetics: For most homeowners front or back yard aesthetics is a primary reason for gardening. There are many elements to consider in order to achieve your desired aesthetics:

- Choosing a variety of plant species that have different colour flowers, and seasons, in which they flower.
- Distributing your plants so the short plants are at the front of your garden and the tall plants are at the rear.
- Spacing plants so you have flowers in blossom evenly spaced throughout your garden throughout the year.
- Planting in threes; plant groups of three of the same plant species near each other. This creates a great impact when the flowers blossom.

Trees: If you would like to include trees in your native landscape, here are a few nice trees for urban areas: Sugar Maple, Bur Oak, Basswood and Hackberry.

Why Garden with Native Plants?

Gardening with native plants is a nice option for homeowners because they:

- Have beautiful colourful flowers
- Are low maintenance compared to annual and perennial gardens
- Require little to no watering once established
- Are adapted to our climate
- Provide food for bees, butterflies and insects
- Are host plants for both butterflies and caterpillars
- Attract birds to your garden

Site Preparation

To prepare your garden site, you will need to remove your turf grass. This can be accomplished by digging up the thin root layer of the grass or by covering the grass by layering cardboard and newspaper, or landscaping fabric, to deprive the grass of sunlight. This is most successful if you cover the area for at least four months in the summer, or preferably one full year before planting.

Solarisation can also be used in a full sun location. This is clear plastic, tucked into the ground on all sides so that it catches the sun and "cooks" the area beneath the clear plastic. This method, if done correctly, can kill the existing vegetation and prepare the soil for planting in just a month.

TIP

Are you going to be digging deep to create a rain collection area or to plant a large tree? Make sure you contact *Ontario One Call* so you don't hit any utilities.

Avoid using peat or sphagnum moss in preparation of your garden beds as sphagnum moss is harvested from wetlands and results in wetland destruction. Instead, try mixing leaf mulch, compost or woodchips into your soil to add organic content.

How to use the Plant Guide

Below are a list of native plants that are suitable for full sun and partial sun gardens. The chart details the plants light and moisture requirements while also providing details on bloom time and plant height as well as a photo of the plants to help you plan your landscape. For a comprehensive list of native plants that can be used in your landscape visit conservationhalton.ca/optimize-garden-butterflies.

LEGEND: Full sun · Part sun · Shade · drought tolerant ← → moisture tolerant

GRASSES

	Name/Scientific Name	Light	Moisture	Height	Bloom Time
	Bottlebrush Sedge *Carex hystericina*	☀	💧💧	2ft	n/a
	Big Bluestem *Andropogon gerardii*	☀	💧	6ft	n/a
	Little Bluestem* *Schizachyrium scoparium*	☀	💧	2ft	n/a

SHRUBS

	Name/Scientific Name	Light	Moisture	Height	Bloom Time
	New Jersey Tea *Ceanothus americanus*	☀ ◐	💧💧	2–3ft	June–July
	Smooth Serviceberry *Amelanchier laevis*	☀ ◐	💧💧	15ft	April–May
	Choke Cherry *Prunus virginiana*	☀ ◐ ☁	💧💧	12ft	April–May
	Red-Osier Dogwood *Cornus stolonifera*	☀ ◐	💧💧💧	6ft	May–June

FLOWERS

	Name/Scientific Name	Light	Moisture	Height	Bloom Time
	Black Eyed Susan *Rudbeckia hirta*	☀	💧	2ft	July–August
	Butterfly Milkweed *Asclepias tuberosa*	☀	💧	2ft	July–August
	Swamp Milkweed *Ascelpias tuberosa*	☀ ◐	💧💧	3–4ft	June–July
	New England Aster *Symphyotrichum novae-anglicae*	☀	💧	3ft	August–October
	Evening Primrose *Oenothera biennis*	☀ ◐	💧	3–5ft	July–September
	Swamp Aster *Symphyotrichum puniceum*	☀ ◐	💧💧	3–4ft	July–September
	Great Blue Lobelia *Lobelia siphilitica*	☀ ◐	💧💧	3ft	June–July
	Wild Columbine *Aguilegia canadesis*	☀ ◐ ☁	💧	2ft	May–June
	Wild Bergamot *Monarda fistulosa*	☀	💧💧	3–5ft	July–September
	Hairy Beardtongue* *Penstemon hirsutus*	☀	💧	1–2ft	June–July
	Canada Anemone* *Anemone canadensis*	☀ ◐ ☁	💧💧	1–2ft	May–July
	Wild Geranium* *Geranium maculatum*	☀ ◐ ☁	💧💧	1–2ft	May–June
	Smooth Oxeye *Heliopsis helianthoides*	☀	💧	2–5ft	June–September
	Common Strawberry* *Frageria virginiana*	☀ ◐ ☁	💧💧	<6inch	May–June

* Good low ground cover – possible alternative to lawn