

GSWA Small Garden Kit Owner's Manual

Four native species that bloom from Spring through Fall to provide beauty in your yard and critical habitat for pollinators



Spring: Eastern Bluestar and Foxglove Beardtongue



Summer: Swamp Milkweed

Fall: New York Aster

Substitution Notice:

Our vendors did not have adequate supply of Eastern Bluestar (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*), so some kits will substitute Hubricht's Bluestar (*Amsonia hubrichtii*)

Kit Contents

Your 16 plant plug kit includes four species selected to thrive in sun or part sun (at least 4-6 hours of sun per day) and moist but not wet conditions.

Spring Bloomers

- Eastern Bluestar (4 plugs) [Hubricht's Bluestar is a substitute in some kits]
- Foxglove Beardtongue (4 plugs)

Summer Bloomer

- Swamp Milkweed (4 Plugs)

Fall Bloomer

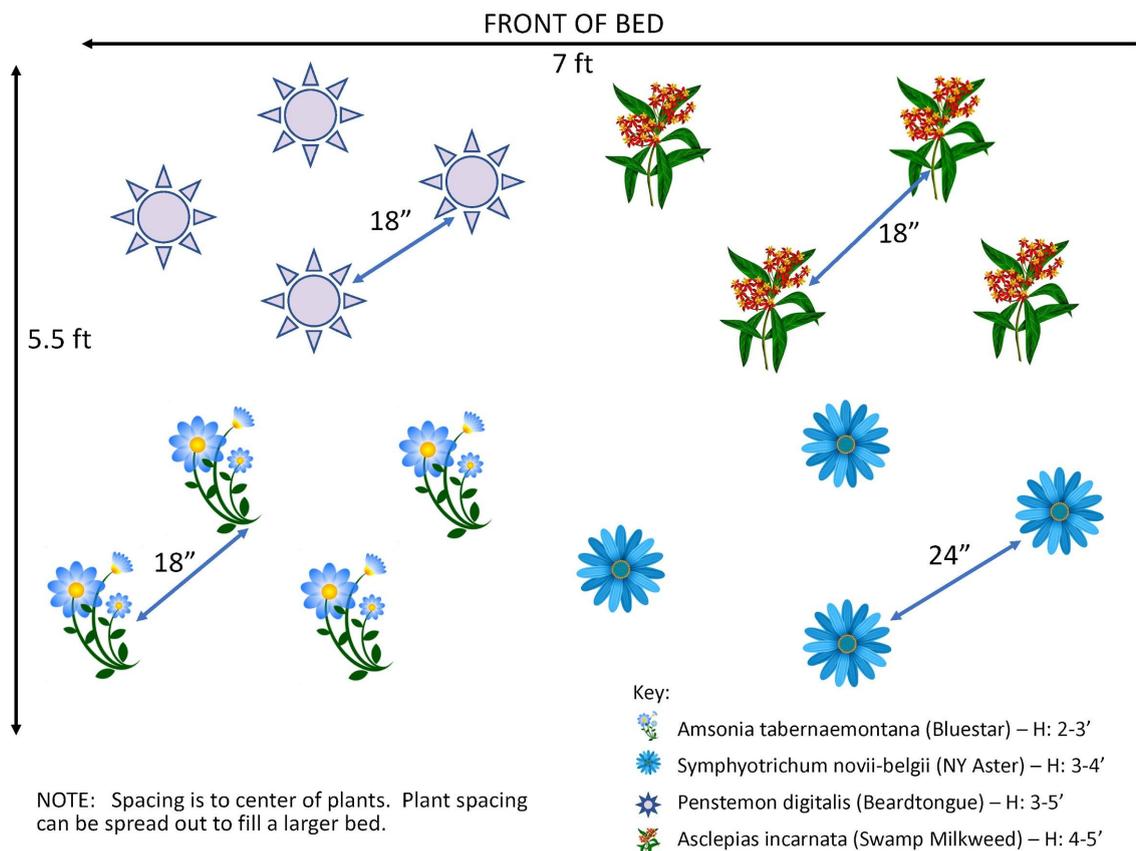
- New York Aster (4 plugs)

Important: As soon as you get home, check to see if your plugs need water. Keep their soil moist to the touch (but not soaked) until you are able to plant them in the ground.

Designing Your Garden

Recommended Design

This design can be used as-is or is easily modified to fit your chosen space and your gardening goals.



The recommended center-to-center spacing is 18" for these large plants. If you add smaller plants such as a ground cover you might plant them at 12" spacings.

Design Considerations

Your Landscaping Style

These plants can fit any style

- A Formal Garden with a high degree of geometric structure
- A Naturalistic Garden with large sweeps of plants (like this design)
- A Wild Garden of dispersed clumps within a random-like matrix (emulating a meadow)

Pollinators will be equally happy with any of these.

Your Garden Shape

This design can be easily shifted to fit a deeper, wider or curved garden bed.

Your Garden Area

This design has center-to-center plant spacings to easily fill a 40 square feet garden. Plants pressing shoulder to shoulder are easier to maintain, reducing the opportunity for weeds to sprout and providing a “green mulch” so that annual mulching is no longer required.

If your space is smaller, these plants can be planted with closer spacings and they will still thrive. Over the years they would grow into these closer spacings on their own.

If your space is larger or your aesthetic is to have more spacing, these plants will also thrive with wider spacings than in the design. The trade-off is that larger spacing will require more maintenance and mulching to manage weeds until the plants are shoulder to shoulder..

Add On!

Add to your kit now or in the future with groups of additional native plants from the 18 individual species from this sale and also from other sources.

- More of any of the species in this kit
- Additional native wildflower species for more variety and color
- Native grasses and sedges for texture and interest
- Native shrubs and trees

When you buy flowering plants from a nursery, please confirm that they are “neonic-free”. Some growers use neonicotinoid insecticides as a brute-force method to protect their plant stock. These systemic insecticides may retain their potency for months and even years-- killing the pollinators you are planning to help. For more information: [Buying Bee-Safe Plants](#)

To explore your native plant options beyond the GSWA plant sale, check out the www.jerseyyards.com website and this brochure [Going Native Northern NJ Edition 2021 6 pages sf.pdf](#)

Site Preparation

Know your sun, moisture and soil conditions

These plants will do well with at least 4-6 hours of sun per day, but for these species more sun is always better.

Moist soil is best, and is the average condition across our area. You may need to water your plants during dry summer periods during the first season, but after that they should only need watering if we experience a drought. Once their roots are established, even if you can't water them they will generally not suffer permanent damage.

These native plants are selected for the clay-silt-loam soils typical for our piedmont or highlands area. The soil does not need extra enrichment! A soil that is too rich will encourage weeds and may prompt some native plants to grow so tall that they fall over.

Prepare the bed

Remove the grass and any other plants that you don't want competing with your new native garden while it gets established. Minimize soil disturbance. There is no need to dig or double dig like you might do for a vegetable bed.

To prepare a new native plant bed in an existing lawn

There's no better way to start than with the lasagna method. Also known as sheet mulching, the lasagna method is a back-saving "no-dig" strategy that kills unwanted weeds and grass by blocking out sunlight, allowing everything to die and decompose without lifting a shovel and importantly, without disturbing the soil and stirring up the weed seed bank.

- Start by running your mower over the area you'd like to transform. If you're creating a new bed, use your garden hose or a length of rope to create the outline of the garden.
- Once you've got a shape you like, begin covering the area with tapeless clean cardboard or 5 to 8 sheets of newspaper. (Use plain cardboard or regular newsprint, but don't use glossy pages.) Overlap the edges of the cardboard and/or paper to close up gaps so that the turf is solidly covered. And keep water handy so you can wet it down as you go, so it won't blow away.
- Once the cardboard or paper is laid out and wet, cover it with about 3-4 inches of composted mulch. No soil amendments, no fertilizer. Native plants grow best in simple soils.

If you use this method in the spring and summer it takes at least a month, usually two, to kill enough weeds and turf. Then you can dig spot planting holes straight through to put in your new plants. Minimum effort, minimum soil disturbance, and great results.

(Adapted from an article by Hennepin County Master Gardener Meleah Maynard)

If you must wait until your bed is ready for planting, it's OK

- Keep plugs in a spot with enough sun and also protection from late season night-time freezes and high winds.
- Keep them moist but not over-watered.
- If the wait will be a month or more, to avoid exhausting the roots keep the growing plants trimmed back to about 6-12 inches and pinch off flowers before they bloom. We can't make guarantees, but with proper care landscape plugs should stay healthy for many weeks.

Planting your plugs

- The only tool you need is a garden knife, trowel, or light-weight one hand pick.
- Lay out where you want to place each plug.
- Dig a hole the plug will fit.
- Plant the plug so that the top of the plug lines up with the top of the soil and tamp the soil around it so that the dirt is snug against the roots.
- Water the plugs in.

Pollinator Garden Management

Native plants are low maintenance, but every garden requires management.

Water enough but not too much. Over-watering can be harmful.

- Through the first year, water them when the surface is dry.
- During the second year and beyond you should only need to water if there is a drought.

Insects will chomp some of these plants, but that is the goal- these plants are hosts for butterfly and moth caterpillars. These tough plants will recover.

- Sometimes undesirable insects like Japanese beetles or aphids may become a problem. Do some research or call your Rutgers agricultural extension hotline to find a caterpillar-safe way to mitigate the problem. Insecticides, even “organic” insecticides, will kill both targeted undesirable insects AND untargeted desirable insects like Monarch caterpillars or butterflies.
- Sometimes it is enough to simply spray bugs off with a hose, wipe off small bugs with a damp rag, or pick off larger bugs one by one

Particularly if your soil is rich, tall-growing plants such as New York Aster may grow taller than you would like and may even flop over.

- A holiday haircut to cut them back by 1/3 or 1/2 around Memorial Day and/or the 4th of July will make your plant shorter and bushier.

A slightly messy garden is the best habitat!

- Leaving the stalks through the fall and winter provides food for birds, shelter for beneficial insects and can be visually attractive.
 - Cut the stalks in early spring after insects are active. Ideally leave some stems about 8-16” tall to be nesting sites for native bees (which do not sting!). The plants will soon cover them.
- Leaving the leaves both in your garden and in your woodlot protects the overwintering pupae of many species of moths and butterflies and also the eggs of insects like Fireflies.
 - They also decompose to enrich the soil.

- In the spring, make sure that thick layers of leaves are not covering basal rosettes of plants like Foxglove Beardtongue and Cardinal Flower.

Gardens are always evolving and you need to guide them and learn from them.

- Watch for and remove invasive plants and other weeds that do not belong.
 - This becomes less of a problem as your plants grow together densely to form a “green mulch”
- Edit your garden to suit your goals
 - If a species in your garden expands too much or does not perform well enough, make changes.
- Try out new species over time, considering flowers, grasses, sedges, shrubs and even trees.
 - A more diverse plant and more vertically layered plant community supports more diverse wildlife.
 - Native plant choices offer a rich palette of sizes, colors, textures, growth habits and wildlife services.
 - For smaller plants, generally add minimum groups of 3-5 for the best visual appeal.
- Experiment and have FUN!

Put your garden on the Homegrown National Park Map

Your pollinator garden is one more step towards rebuilding habitat for wildlife across the United States. It is part of what popular lecturer, writer and entomologist Doug Tallamy describes as our “Homegrown National Park”.

[Gardening for Life / Doug Tallamy — HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK](#)

If you want to, you can register your yard as part of this growing network of thousands more and also watch our Homegrown National Park grow.

[MAP HUB](#)

Explore the Homegrown National Park website to learn more.

<https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>.

If you have questions about your native plant garden

Feel free to email us at GSWAplantsale@gmail.com

We want your pollinator garden to get a good start so it will provide you with years of enjoyment!

About each plant

Eastern Bluestar



Apr-May-Jun blooms

Sun to Part Sun

Dry to Moist

1-3'

Profuse clusters of blue, star-shaped flowers on 1-3 ft. clumps of upright stems in early spring. Narrow, oval feathery leaves turn golden-yellow in the fall. Good butterfly nectar and early pollinator food supply.

[Substitution for Eastern Bluestar in some kits]

Hubricht's Bluestar: This species is closely related to eastern bluestar. It differs primarily with its elongated needle-like leaves that bring a lovely texture to the garden. In spring, you'll see a profusion of delicate lavender-blue star shaped flowers in clusters at the end of stems. This has the same neat 2-3 foot mounding form characteristic of eastern bluestar and a beautiful yellow-gold color in the fall.

Foxglove Beardtongue



Apr-May-Jun blooms

Sun to Part Shade

Dry to Moist

3-4'

Tubular white flowers on elegant 3-4 ft. stalks from April to June. Important to bees. Low basal rosette when not in bloom.



Swamp Milkweed

May-Jun-Jul blooms

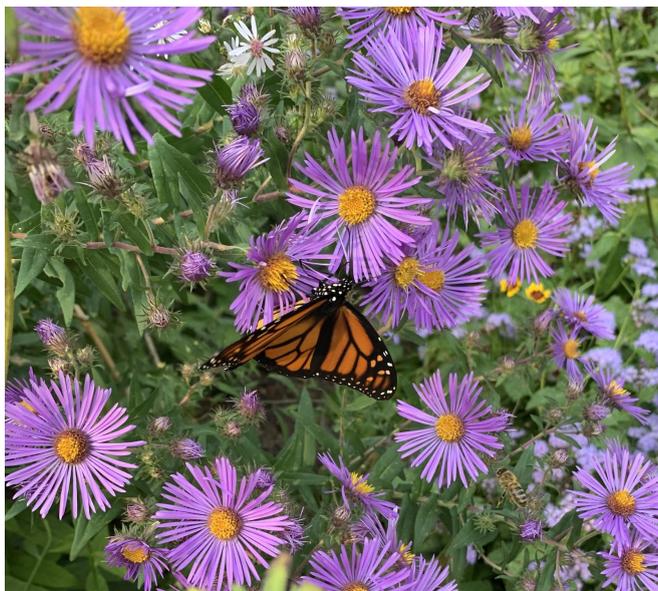
Sun to Part Sun

Moist to Wet

3-4'

Fragrant pink blooms May to July. Large, interesting seed pods. Up to 4 ft. tall. Beloved Monarch nectar and larval food source. Caterpillars may defoliate it temporarily but the plant will rebound to feed more caterpillars!

New York Aster



Aug-Sep-Oct blooms

Sun to Part Sun

Moist to Wet

3-5'

Prolific 1½" blue-violet blooms on 3-5 ft. tall branching stems from late summer till frost. Pinch back in June to keep shorter. Host for over 100 butterfly species, pollinator magnet.

