



GSWA Shade Kit

2022 Owner's Manual

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



Foamflower



Blue Lobelia



Wreath Goldenrod



Blue Wood Aster



Christmas Fern

Kit Contents

Your 23-plant plug kit includes five species that thrive in part-sun to shade conditions in your garden and average to moist conditions.

The kit includes:

- Foamflower, *Tiarella cordifolia*, 4 plugs
- Blue lobelia, *Lobelia siphilitica*, 5 plugs
- Wreath goldenrod, *Solidago caesia*, 5 plugs
- Blue wood aster, *Symphyotrichum cordifolium*, 5 plugs
- Christmas fern, *Polystichum acrostichoides*, 4 plugs

Important: Once 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.

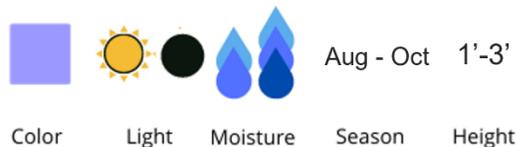
Foamflower



Wreath goldenrod



Blue lobelia



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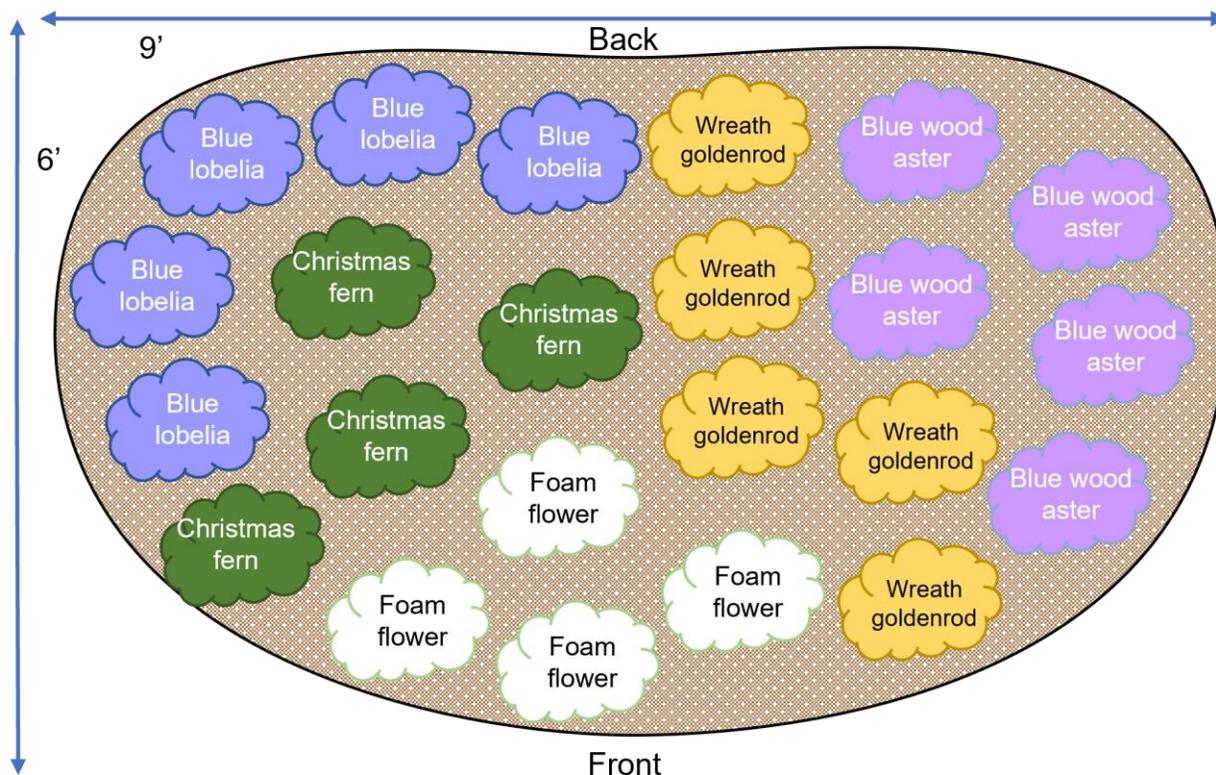


Christmas fern



Designing your garden: Sample Design

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



Design Considerations

Your Landscaping Style

These plants can fit any style from a formal garden to a naturalistic garden like this design to a wild garden with clumps. Pollinators will be equally happy with any of these.

Your Garden

This design can be easily altered to fit a deeper, wider, or curved garden bed. These designs use moderate 18-inch center-to-center plant spacings to easily fill a 100 or 50 square foot area. The goal is to have plants pressing shoulder to shoulder for easier maintenance. Tightly spaced plants create a “green mulch” reducing the opportunity for weeds to sprout so that annual mulching is no longer required. You can choose to plant on a tighter spacing. A larger spacing will require more maintenance and mulching to manage weeds.

Add On!

These species can be planted alone, or with other shade-tolerant individual species.

Site Preparation

Know your sun, moisture, and soil conditions

These plants will do well in part shade to shade conditions, but not deep shade.

Moist soil is best for these species. You may need to water your plants during dry summer periods during the first season, after that they should only need watered during drought. Once their roots are established, they will generally not suffer permanent damage even without watering.

These native plants are selected for the clay-silt-loam soils typical for our piedmont or highlands area.

Prepare the bed

If planting in a prepared basin, remove grass and any other unwanted plants that may compete with your new native garden while establishing. Minimize soil disturbance.

To prepare a new native plant bed replacing previous plantings:

Sheet mulching is a great way to start! It is a back-saving “no-dig” strategy that kills unwanted weeds and grass by blocking out sunlight, allowing everything to die and decompose, minimizing soil disturbance and stirring up the weed seed bank.

- Mow the area you’d like to transform. Use a garden hose or a length of rope to create the garden outline.
- Cover the area with tapeless clean cardboard or 5 to 8 sheets of newspaper (don’t use glossy pages.) Overlap the edges to prevent gaps so that the turf is solidly covered. Wet down as you go.
- Cover cardboard with 3-4” of composted mulch. No soil amendments, no fertilizer. Native plants grow best in simple soils.
- Poke many small holes through the cardboard to maintain rainwater infiltration.

During spring and summer, this will take at least a month, usually two, to kill enough weeds and turf. Dig spot planting holes straight through to plant plugs.

For more information, go to [The Lasagna Method \(Sheet Mulching\)](#)

If not planting immediately

- Keep plugs in a sheltered spot with enough sun and protect from frost/wind.
- Keep them moist but do not over-watered.
- Trim plants back to 6-12” and pinch off flowers if they will not be planted for more than a month. 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 lightweight one hand pick.
- Extract each plug gently from its socket. Squeeze the sides to loosen. Push up from the bottom or use a narrow spatula to ease the plug out. Avoid pulling on the plant stem!
- Lay out where you want to place each plug. Dig a hole large enough for the plug.
- Plant so the top of the plug is even with the top of the soil. Tamp firmly.
- Water the plugs in.

Pollinator Garden Management

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

Over-watering can be harmful. Through the first year, water them when the surface is dry. The second year and beyond you should only need to water during a drought.

Insects may chomp on plants, but these plants are larval host to butterflies and will recover.

Undesirable insects like Japanese beetles or aphids may become a problem. Find a caterpillar-safe way to mitigate the problem (Rutgers agricultural extension hotline can help). Even “organic” insecticides can kill desirable insects like Monarch caterpillars or butterflies.

- Healthy pollinator gardens host beneficial insects like lady bugs that eat pests.
- Mechanical removal, eg. spraying, wiping, or picking off large bugs works well.

Deer may also chomp some of these plants. Some species are more deer resistant than others.

- Plants are most palatable when young and don't have deep roots to recover.
- Organic deer repellents successfully repel deer and rabbits but require re-applications
- Cages and fences can be effective physical barriers but check local ordinances.
 - Deer fences should typically be 7-8' tall but for small enclosures 5' is effective.

If your soil is rich, tall-growing bushy plants may grow taller than wanted and can flop over. Avoid this by cutting back by $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ from Memorial Day to July 4th to shorten plant height.

A slightly messy garden is the best habitat! Leaving the stalks through the winter provides food and shelter for wildlife as well as visual interest. Cut the stalks in early spring after insects are active. In the fall, leave the autumn leaves to protect overwintering pupae and firefly eggs in your yard. The leaves decompose, enriching the soil but, ensure they are removed in the spring to protect basal rosettes.

Monitor your garden as it changes. Remove invasive plants and weeds little and often. If species prove too prolific, divide and share. Diverse yards incorporate multiple layers and support more wildlife.

Experiment and have FUN!

About each plant

Foamflower



Flowers: April - June
Light: Part-shade to Shade
Moisture: Moist
Height: 1 ft

Description: Tiny, pink buds, open into delicate foot-tall clusters of white flowers in late spring. This plant spreads to form colonies and works well as a groundcover in shade. Good early nectar source for pollinators

Blue lobelia



Flowers: August - October
Light: Part-shade to Shade
Moisture: Moist to Wet
Height: 1-3 ft

Description: Spikes of dense blue, tubular flowers in whorled clusters. Nectar source for hummingbirds and bees.

Wreath goldenrod



Flowers: August - October
Light: Sun to Shade
Moisture: Dry to Moist
Height: 1-3 ft

Description: Gently arching stems are covered in clusters of bright yellow flowers late summer into fall. Short, well-behaved goldenrod is host to many moths and butterflies as well as the beneficial predatory insects.

Blue wood aster



Flowers: August - Nov
Light: Sun or Shade
Moisture: Dry to Moist
Height: 2-3ft

Description: Numerous, small ½ inch lavender daisy-like flowers cover the plant in the fall. The lavender-blue flower attracts many pollinators including bees, skippers, and butterflies. In the spring, the low heart-shaped leaves provide good ground cover.

Christmas fern



Evergreen
Light: Part-shade to shade
Moisture: Dry to Moist
Height: 1-2 ft

Description: Clumping evergreen fern with leathery lance-shaped fronds. Silver fiddle heads in spring. Good as ground cover and in borders.

Put your garden on the Map

Each new native planting adds to the Pollinator Pathway that renews and extends wildlife habitat across our neighborhoods and region, whether it is one container on the patio or fully native backyard.

If you plant it, the pollinators and birds really will come!

Please take a minute to [Register Your Pollinator Garden](#) on the map to encourage the growing sustainable landscaping community.

To encourage your neighbors, we also recommend attractive explanatory garden signs.

You can purchase a Pollinator Pathway Garden sign through the GSWA plant sale.



If you have questions about your native plant garden

Feel free to email us at plantsale@greatswamp.org We want your pollinator garden to get a good start so it will provide you with years of enjoyment!



Great Swamp Watershed Association

The Passaic River **WATERKEEPER**® ALLIANCE Affiliate

P.O. Box 300 • New Vernon, NJ 07976

(973) 538-3500 • GreatSwamp.org