



GSWA Sunny Basic 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



Golden Alexander



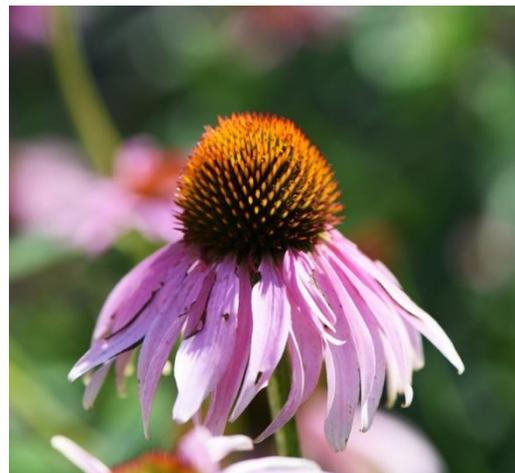
Swamp Milkweed



Virginia Mountain Mint



New York Aster



Purple Coneflower

Kit Contents

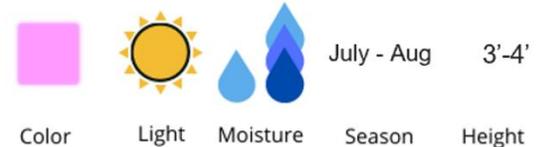
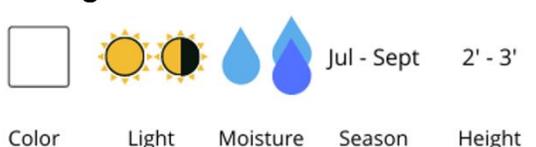
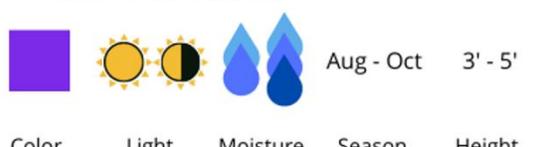
Your 25-plant plug kit includes five species that thrive in sunny gardens (6 hours of sun per day minimum) and moist conditions.

The kit includes:

- Golden Alexander, *Zizia aptera*, 5 plugs
- Swamp milkweed, *Asclepias incarnata*, 5 plugs
- Virginia mountain mint, *Pycnanthemum virginianum*, 5 plugs
- New York aster, *Symphyotrichum novi-belgii*, 5 plugs
- Purple coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*, 5 plugs

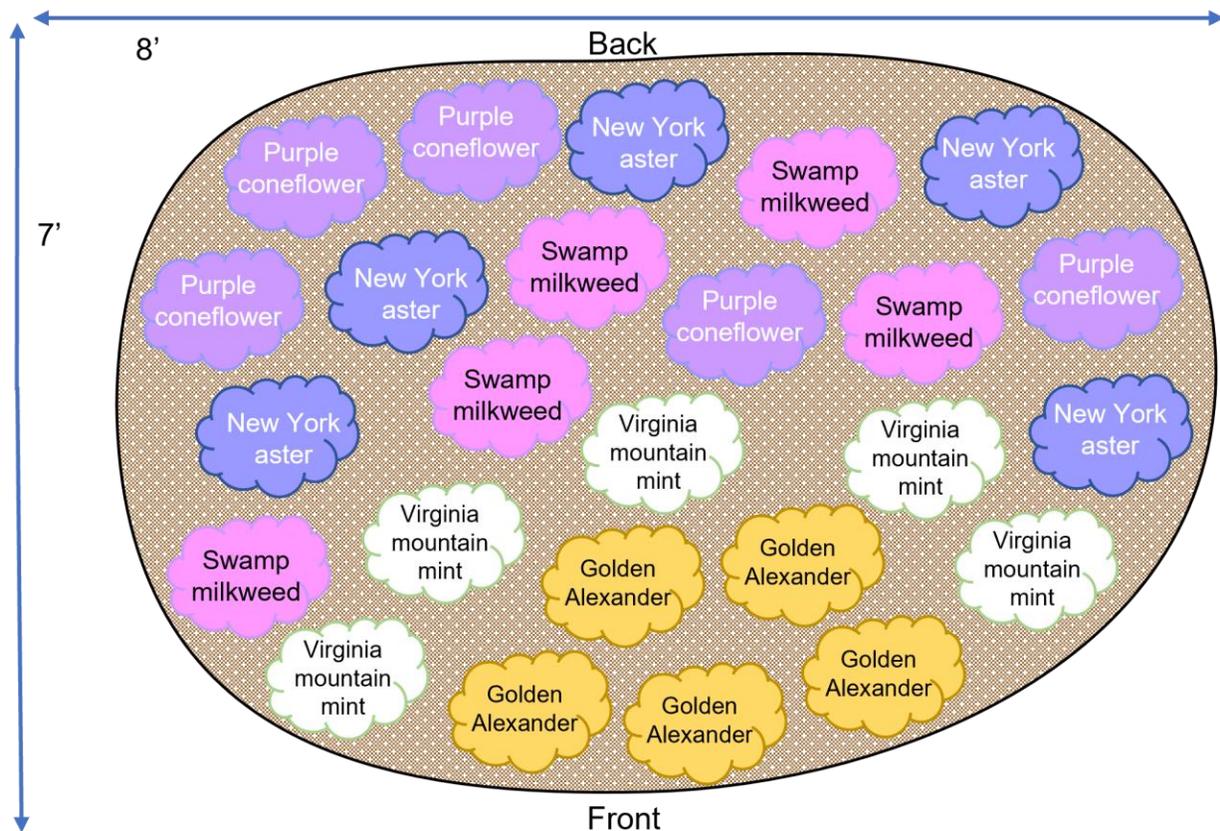
Substitution Notice: Depending on limited availability, Golden Alexander (*Zizia aurea*) may be substituted for heartleaf Golden Alexander (*Zizia aptera*).

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.

<h3>Golden Alexander</h3>  <p>Color Light Moisture Season Height</p>	<h3>Swamp milkweed</h3>  <p>Color Light Moisture Season Height</p>
<h3>Virginia mountain mint</h3>  <p>Color Light Moisture Season Height</p>	<h3>Purple coneflower</h3>  <p>Color Light Moisture Season Height</p>
<h3>New York aster</h3>  <p>Color Light Moisture Season Height</p>	

Designing your garden: Sample 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, with our Expansion Kits, or with more individual species.

Site Preparation

Know your sun, moisture, and soil conditions

The plants in the Sunny Basic Kit need 6 hours of sunlight per day but more sun is always better.

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 1/3- 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

Golden Alexander



Flowers: May- June
Light: Sun to Part Shade
Moisture: Moist
Height: 1-2.5 ft

Description: Flat round yellow clusters bloom late spring on tidy, relatively low growing plants. Provides nectar and pollen for early pollinators and is a host plant for black swallowtail butterflies.

Heart leaf Golden Alexander (*Zizia aptera*) has heart-shaped leaves. Golden Alexander (*Zizia aurea*) has divided serrated leaves.

Swamp Milkweed



Flowers: July - Aug
Light: Sun to Part Sun
Moisture: Moist to Wet
Height: 3-4 ft

Description: Fragrant Pink blooms and large, interesting seed pods. Beloved Monarch nectar and larval food source. Caterpillars may defoliate but the plant will rebound to feed more caterpillars!

Virginia Mountain Mint



Flowers: July - Sept
Light: Sun to Part Sun
Moisture: Dry to Moist
Height: 2-3 ft

Description: Tiny white flower clusters are long lasting mid to late summer. They positively vibrate with pollinator activity. Superstar plants for nectar and pollen. Plants spread by rhizomes but are far less aggressive than the non-native mints. Leaves for mint tea as well!

New York Aster



Flowers: Aug - Sept
Light: Sun to Part-Sun
Moisture: Moist to wet
Height: 3-5 ft

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

Purple Coneflower



Flowers: July- Sept
Light: Full Sun
Moisture: Dry to Moist
Height: 2-4 ft

Description: Long-lasting, pinkish-lavender robust flowers bloom on 2-4 ft. stems, summer to early fall. A garden classic that is an excellent source of pollen and nectar for pollinators and seeds for Goldfinches.

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

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