Dry Shade Kit

2023 Owner’s Manual

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

Great Swamp Watershed Association Native Plant Program 2023
Kit Contents

Your 25-plant plug kit includes five species that thrive in drier, shady gardens.

The kit includes:

- Coralbells, *Heuchera villosa*, 5 plugs
- Curly wood sedge, *Carex rosea*, 5 plugs
- Stonecrop, *Sedum ternatum*, 5 plugs
- White Wood Aster, *Eurybia divaricate*, 5 plugs
- Wreath Goldenrod, *Solidago caesia*, 5 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.
Designing your garden: Sample Design

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

![Sample Design Diagram]

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 eventually 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, until plants establish.

**Add On!**
These species can be planted alone or can be combined with your favorite shade-tolerant species to make a larger planting.
Site Preparation

*Know your sun, moisture, and soil conditions*

The plants in the Dry Shade Kit will do well in part shade to shade conditions, but not thrive in deep shade.

Dry to average 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 region.

*Prepare the bed*

If planting in a prepared bed, 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 avoiding 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, nutrient poor 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)] on or resources page.

*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-water.
- 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 soil firmly.
- Water the plugs in well.

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 soil 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 hosts to butterflies and plants 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 ladybugs 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 exclosures 5’ is effective.

Shortening up giants. If your soil is rich, tall-growing bushy plants may grow taller than wanted and can flop over. Avoid this by cutting back by ⅓-½ 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

**Coralbells**

- **Flowers:** Jul - Sept
- **Light:** Sun to Part-Sun
- **Moisture:** Average to Wet
- **Height:** 3-5 ft

A low mounding, 1-2 ft evergreen produces cream-colored flowers on dainty stalks in summer to fall. The tiny, tubular flowers attract both native bees and hummingbirds, while the evergreen basal leaves provide cover year-round. Prefers dry to moist soils and dappled sunlight but grows in full sun to part shade.

**Curly Wood Sedge**

- **Flowers:** May - Aug
- **Light:** Sun to Part-Shade
- **Moisture:** Average - Moist
- **Height:** 2-4 ft

Semi-evergreen, this small mounding native sedge with dark green foliage provides food for a variety of songbirds. Green star-shaped sparse-looking flowers bloom in the late spring. Does best in sun to part shade and average soils but copes with dry to wet conditions. Can be used as a low groundcover.

**Stonecrop**

- **Flowers:** Apr - June
- **Light:** Sun to Part-Shade
- **Moisture:** Average to Moist
- **Height:** 2-4 ft

A native, mostly evergreen succulent, and excellent groundcover, this low growing plant has star-like white flowers that bloom in early spring, offering vital early pollen and nectar. Pollinators include bees and butterflies, and this plant is a host species of buckeye butterfly and the variegated fritillary.

**White Wood Aster**

- **Flowers:** Aug - Oct
- **Light:** Sun to Part-Sun
- **Moisture:** Dry to Moist
- **Height:** 3-4 ft

One of the earliest asters to bloom, its airy, arching bright white flowers reach 2-3 feet. With attractive dark green foliage and dark almost black stems contrasting the showy white blooms. Host of the pearl crescent and checkerspot butterflies, while also providing nectar to bees and butterflies, this plant is a must have for fall gardens.

**Wreath Goldenrod**

- **Flowers:** July - Sept
- **Light:** Sun to Part-Shade
- **Moisture:** Dry to Moist
- **Height:** 1-3 ft

Gently arching stems reaching 1-3ft. high 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 beneficial predatory insects. Tolerant of shade, it blooms best with some sun.
### Your native garden throughout the year

#### Emerge, Bloom and Seed Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species Name</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coralbells</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>evergreen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curly Wood Sedge</td>
<td></td>
<td>green</td>
<td></td>
<td>semi-evergreen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonecrop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>semi-evergreen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Wood Aster</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wreath Goldenrod</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Garden Maintenance Timeframe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species Name</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coralbells</td>
<td>divide and replant</td>
<td>deadhead</td>
<td>divide and replant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curly Wood Sedge</td>
<td>divide and replant</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stonecrop</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>White Wood Aster</td>
<td>cut back last year's stalks to 8-15&quot;</td>
<td>cut by 1/2-1/3 by July 4 to shorten up plant</td>
<td>divide and replant</td>
<td>leave stems for habitat</td>
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<td>Wreath Goldenrod</td>
<td>cut back last year's stalks to 8-15&quot;, divide and replant</td>
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#### Key:
- **Emerge**: green
- **Bloom**: yellow
- **Seed**: brown

#### Some native pollinators that frequent these plants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species Name</th>
<th>Pollinators, Larval Hosts, and Specialist Species</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coralbells</td>
<td><strong>Bees</strong>: bumble, leafcutter, long-horned, small resin&lt;br&gt;<strong>Butterflies</strong>: great spangled fritillary, Peck’s skipper, silver spotted skipper&lt;br&gt;<strong>Others</strong>: bee flies, soldier beetles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curly Wood Sedge</td>
<td><strong>Bees</strong>: Forbes mining bee&lt;br&gt;<strong>Butterflies</strong>: variegated fritillary&lt;br&gt;<strong>Other</strong>: sedum aphid&lt;br&gt;<strong>Larval Host Species</strong>: common buckeye, Phoebus apollo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonecrop</td>
<td><strong>Bees</strong>: bumbles, green sweat, long-horned, small sweat, yellow-faced&lt;br&gt;<strong>Other</strong>: syrphid flies&lt;br&gt;<strong>Specialist Species</strong>: mining bees&lt;br&gt;<strong>Larval Host Species</strong>: goldenrod hooded owlet, pearl crescent, silvery crescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Wood Aster</td>
<td><strong>Bees</strong>: bumbles, green sweats, leafcutters, long-horned, small carpenters, sweats, yellow-faced&lt;br&gt;<strong>Butterflies</strong>: buckeyes, crescents, monarchs, sulphurs, viceroy, whites&lt;br&gt;<strong>Wasps</strong>: grass-carrying, paper, potters, mason, square-headed, thread-waisted&lt;br&gt;<strong>Others</strong>: bee flies, locust borer beetle, syrphid flies&lt;br&gt;<strong>Specialist species</strong>: mining bee&lt;br&gt;<strong>Larval Host Species</strong>: goldenrod hooded owlet</td>
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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 a 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!