

# Dry Shade Kit

2024 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 2024

## Kit Contents

This kit is made for well-drained, drier, shade in the gardens where plants typically have difficulty surviving. Fiery red blooms of fire pink are sure to attract hummingbirds to your garden in spring. By early summer, the ground-covering tall anemone will produce creamy white flowers a foot above its foliage. These pair well with the tubular lilac flowers of longsepal beardtongue. Fall will bring numerous small flowers of blue wood aster that will delight not only late season pollinators, but also the small mammals and songbirds that feed on its seeds in late fall. Lastly, curly wood sedge provides habitat and cover for wildlife all year round. Plants in this kit do best in part-sun to shade (but not deep shade) and dry to moist soils. Your 25-plant plug kit includes five species that thrive in drier, shady gardens. The kit includes:

- Blue Wood Aster, *Symphotrichum cordifolium*, 5 plugs
- Curly Wood Sedge, *Carex rosea*, 5 plugs
- Fire Pink, *Silene virginica*, 5 plugs
- Longsepal Beardtongue, *Penstemon calycosus*, 5 plugs
- Tall Anemone, *Anemone virginiana*, 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: Design Considerations

### *Your Landscaping Style*

These plants can fit any style, including a formal garden, a naturalistic garden (like this design), or a wild garden with clumps. Pollinators will be equally happy with any of these options.

### *Your Garden*


























This design can be easily altered to fit a deeper, wider, or curved garden bed. These designs use moderate 10-12-inch center-to-center plant spacings to easily fill a 80 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.

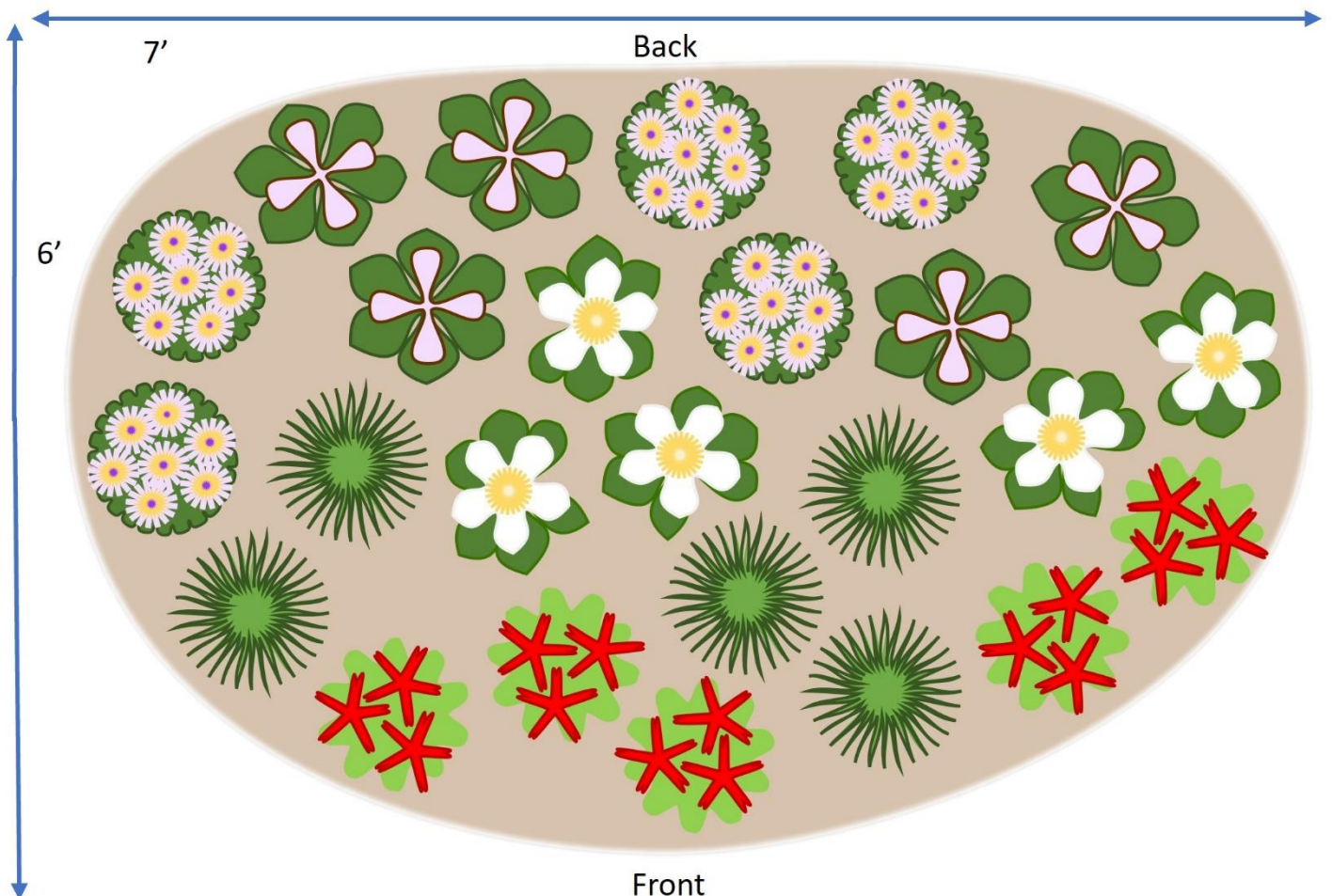
### *Add On!*

These species can be planted alone or can be combined with other sun-loving kits or your favorite individual species to make a larger planting.

# Designing your garden: Sample Design

Can be used as is or easily modified to fit your chosen space and your gardening goals. The deer icon indicates high (red) and medium (yellow) deer resistance; however, no plant is deer proof and **deer still may browse on these species.**

<p><b>Blue Wood Aster</b>  </p>					<p><b>Curly Wood Sedge</b>  </p>				
			Aug - Nov	2-3'				Apr - Jul	1-2'
Color	Light	Moisture	Season	Height	Color	Light	Moisture	Season	Height
<p><b>Fire Pink</b>  </p>					<p><b>Longsepal Beardtongue</b>  </p>				
			Apr - June	1'				May- June	2-3'
Color	Light	Moisture	Season	Height	Color	Light	Moisture	Season	Height
<p><b>Tall Anemone</b>  </p>									
			May- June	1'-3'					
Color	Light	Moisture	Season	Height					



# 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 will 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 our 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's 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 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 609-989-6853 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 enclosures 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  $\frac{1}{3}$ -  $\frac{1}{2}$  from Memorial Day to July 4<sup>th</sup> 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

### Blue Wood Aster



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

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. The branching plant grows 2-3' tall. In the spring, the low heart-shaped leaves provide good ground cover. Does well in both sun or shade, dry to moist soils.

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### Curly Wood Sedge



Flowers: Apr - Jul  
Light: Part Shade to Shade  
Moisture: Dry to Moist  
Height: 1-2 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. Host to skippers and other insects. Does best in sun to part shade and average soils but copes with dry to wet conditions. Can be used as a low groundcover.

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### Fire Pink



Flowers: Apr - June  
Light: Part Shade  
Moisture: Dry to Moist  
Height: 1 ft

This beautiful spring bloomer grows just 1 ft tall with bright, star-shaped 1.5 inch flowers. A member of the catchfly genus, the sticky hairs on the fire pink can trap small insects. The bright red flower will attract hummingbirds, its primary pollinator. Grows well in both sun and shade and prefers dry to moist soils.

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### Longsepal Beardtongue

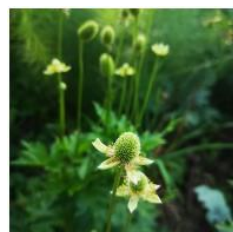


Flowers: May - June  
Light: Part Shade  
Moisture: Dry to Moist  
Height: 2-3 ft

Growing 2-3ft tall, this adaptable plant's long, lilac, tubular flowers attract long-tongued bees and hummingbirds in late spring and early summer. Host to the chalcedony midget. Grows well in sun to part sun gardens, with dry to moist soils.

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### Tall Anemone



Flowers: May - June  
Light: Sun to Part Shade  
Moisture: Dry to Moist  
Height: 1-3 ft

Delicate white, single flowers rise on long stalks 3 ft above mounds of dark green foliage. Flowering in spring and early summer, this plant produces pollen for many native bees. The low-growing leaves can also be used as ground cover. Provides winter interest with its thimble like seed heads, and can grow in both sun and shade, dry or moist soils.

# Your native garden throughout the year

Emerge, Bloom and Seed Timeline									
Species Name	Spring		Summer			Fall		Winter	
Blue Wood Aster									
Curly Wood Sedge								semi-evergreen	
Fire Pink									
Longsepal Beardtongue									
Tall Anemone									
	<b>Key:</b>		<b>Emerge</b>			<b>Bloom</b>		<b>Seed</b>	

Garden Maintenance Timeframe				
Species Name	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Blue Wood Aster	cut back last year's stalks to 8-15"		leave seedheads for wildlife leave stems for habitat	
Curly Wood Sedge				
Fire Pink				
Longsepal Beardtongue	cut back last year's stalks to 8-15"		leave stems for habitat	
Tall Anemone	cut back last year's stalks to 8-15"		leave stems for habitat	

Some native pollinators that frequent these plants	
Species Name	Pollinators, Larval Hosts, and Specialist Species
Blue Wood Aster	<b>Bees:</b> bumble, green sweat, long-horned, small sweat, sweat, yellow-faced <b>Butterflies:</b> buckeye, clouded sulfur, painted lady, pearl crescent <b>Moths:</b> corn earworm, yellow-collared scape <b>Wasps:</b> mason <b>Others:</b> greenbottle flies, syrphid flies <b>Specialist Species:</b> mining bee <b>Larval Host Species:</b> brown-hooded owlet, northern crescent, pearl crescent, saddleback caterpillar, silvery checkerspot
Curly Wood Sedge	<b>Larval Host Species:</b> common wood nymph, mulberry wing, numerous species of skippers, ringlet, Virginia ctenucha
Fire Pink	<b>Birds:</b> ruby-throated hummingbird
Longsepal Beardtongue	<b>Bees:</b> bumble, digger, mason, leaf-cutting, sweat, small carpenter <b>Birds:</b> hummingbird <b>Moths:</b> Sphinx <b>Others:</b> syrphid flies <b>Larval Host Species:</b> Chalcedony midget
Tall Anemone	<b>Bees:</b> bumble, digger, mason, leaf-cutting, sweat, small carpenter <b>Birds:</b> hummingbird <b>Moths:</b> Sphinx <b>Others:</b> syrphid flies <b>Larval Host Species:</b> Chalcedony midget

## 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](mailto: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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