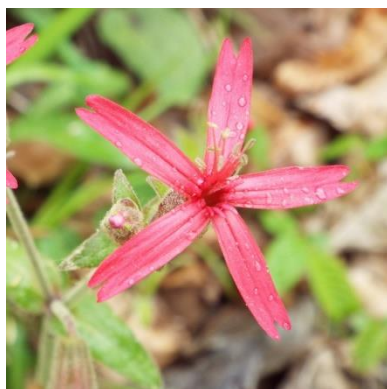


Dry Sun Kit

2025 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 2025

Kit Contents

Perfect for dry, sunny spots where it is difficult for many other plants to survive, like hellstrip or container gardens. Red bursts of fire pink, beloved by hummingbirds, bloom in early spring. Lanceleaf coreopsis and butterfly milkweed take over in the summer with bursts of yellow and orange. Gray goldenrod will bridge late summer into fall, where aromatic aster will bloom until frost. Spent seed heads of lanceleaf coreopsis, gray goldenrod and aromatic aster are seed sources for small mammals and overwintering songbirds throughout the fall and winter months. Deer resistant, although deer may browse plants if hungry enough. Full sun and dry to average soils. The kit includes:

- Aromatic Aster, *Symphotrichum oblongifolium*, 5 plugs
- Butterfly Milkweed, *Asclepias tuberosa*, 5 plugs
- Fire Pink, *Silene virginica*, 5 plugs
- Gray Goldenrod, *Solidago nemoralis*, 5 plugs
- Lanceleaf Coreopsis, *Coreopsis lanceolata*, 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.

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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




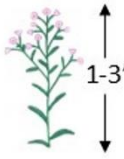




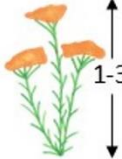





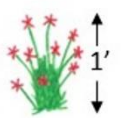










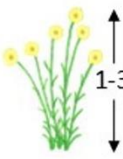

This design can be easily altered to fit a deeper, wider, or curved garden bed. These designs use moderate 10-12-inch center-to-center plant spacings to easily fill a 80 or 50 square foot area. The goal is to eventually have plants pressing shoulder to shoulder for easier maintenance. Tightly spaced 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.

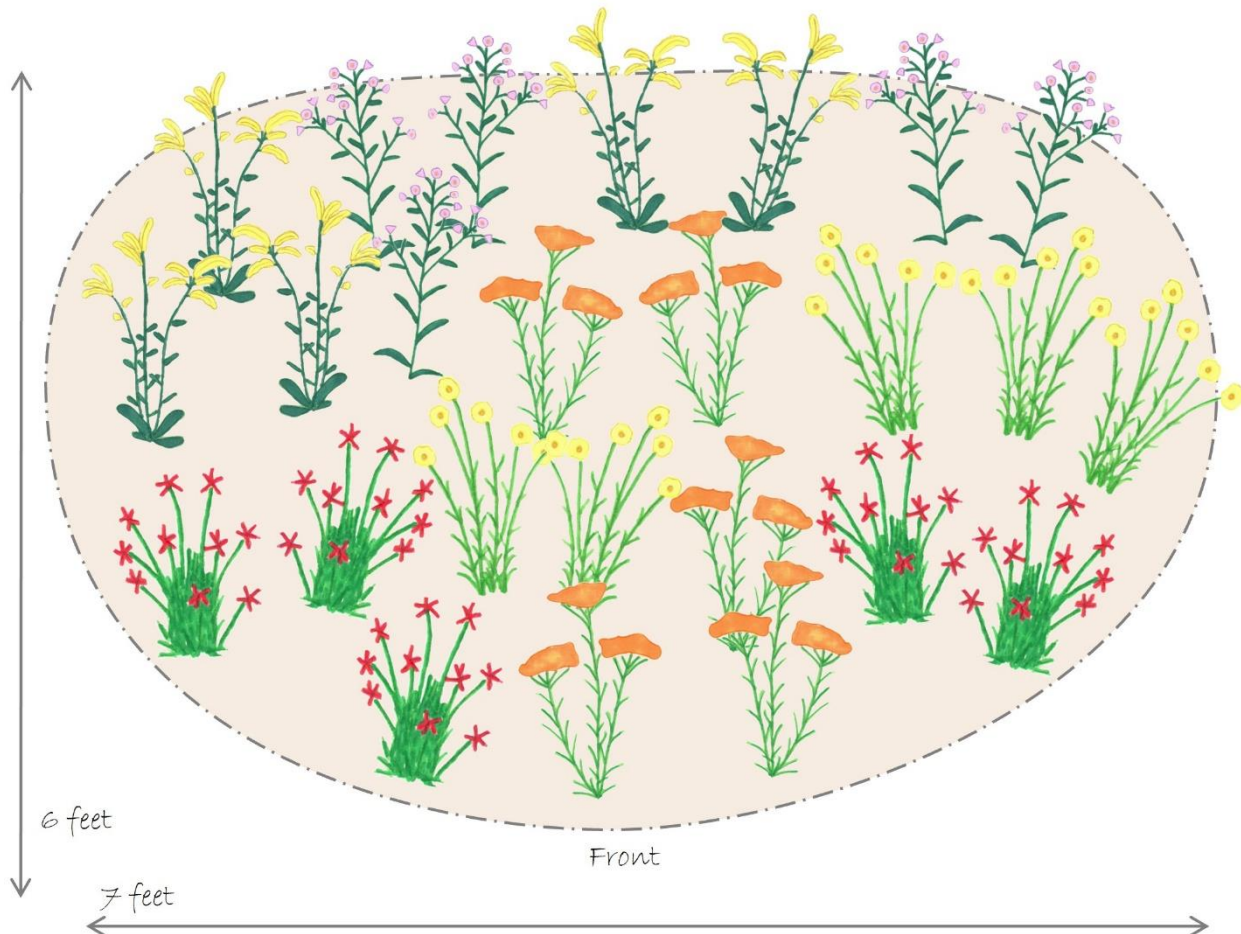
Add On!

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, **deer still may browse on these species.**

<p>Aromatic Aster</p> <p>Color: </p> <p>Light: </p> <p>Moisture: </p> <p>Shape:  1-3'</p> <p>Season:  Sept - Nov</p>	<p>Butterfly Milkweed</p> <p>Color: </p> <p>Light: </p> <p>Moisture: </p> <p>Shape:  1-3'</p> <p>Season:  Jun - Aug</p>
<p>Fire Pink</p> <p>Color: </p> <p>Light:  </p> <p>Moisture: </p> <p>Shape:  1'</p> <p>Season:  Apr - Jun</p>	<p>Gray Goldenrod</p> <p>Color: </p> <p>Light: </p> <p>Moisture: </p> <p>Shape:  2-3'</p> <p>Season:  Jul - Sept</p>
<p>Lanceleaf Coreopsis</p> <p>Color: </p> <p>Light:  </p> <p>Moisture: </p> <p>Shape:  1-3'</p> <p>Season:  May - Jul</p>	



Site Preparation

Know your sun, moisture, and soil conditions

The plants in the Dry Sun Kit need 6 hours of sunlight per day, but more sun is always better.

These species grow well in dry to average soil conditions. 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.

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 4th to shorten plant height. This method can be used for aromatic aster, gray goldenrod and lanceleaf coreopsis, if desired.

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

Aromatic Aster



Flowers: Sept - Nov
Light: Sun
Moisture: Dry to Moist
Height: 1-3 ft

One of the last asters to bloom, the daisy-like purple flowerheads can bloom until frost. The stems of aromatic aster reach 1-3 feet and are aromatic when crushed, making it unpalatable to deer and rabbits. A shorter aster, it is great for border plantings. Larval host to the slivery checkerspot as well as multiple moth species. Drought tolerant, preferring sun and dry to moist soils

Butterfly Milkweed



Flowers: June - Aug
Light: Sun
Moisture: Dry
Height: 1-3 ft

Striking long-lasting orange blooms in flat-topped clusters followed by attractive seedpods. Many bee species and other insects flock to this flower for its nectar. Host to many butterflies including monarch, queen and gray hairstreak butterflies. Deep taproot makes it drought tolerant, but hard to transplant. Prefers full sun, dry soil.

Fire Pink



Flowers: Apr - June
Light: Sun to 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.

Gray Goldenrod



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

One of the smaller goldenrods, gray goldenrod displays clusters of yellow flowers late summer into early fall reaching 2-3 feet tall. It is a hardy plant; drought tolerant and deer resistant. Readily reseeds, spent flowerheads can be pruned back to minimize spreading. Gray goldenrod is a host plant to the wavy-lined emerald butterfly, provides nectar and pollen to a wide array of pollinators, and is a seed source for small birds. Prefers dry soils and full sun.

Lanceleaf Coreopsis



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

Large, golden sunny daisy-like flowers on rigid 1-3 foot stems bloom for weeks on end on this valuable pollinator magnet. Bees and butterflies pollinate this plant, while finches love the ripe seeds. Endlessly adaptable, this plant is good for new meadow plantings. It will slowly move around the yard, through self-seeding. Prefers dry to moist soils and full sun.

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!



Great Swamp Watershed Association

The Passaic River **WATERKEEPER**® ALLIANCE Affiliate

P.O. Box 300 • New Vernon, NJ 07976

(973) 538-3500 • GreatSwamp.org