

Moist 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

This kit is perfect for those who have a rain garden basin in full or partial sun. Golden Alexander and scarlet bee balm live up to their names starting in May, their blossoms intermingling to create a fiery show for hungry early pollinators. In July swamp milkweed adds fluffy bundles of small pink flowers that draw monarch and queen butterflies. As summer comes to a close, the purple-pink spiky blooms of NY ironweed and bright yellow sunbursts of swamp sunflower will attract songbirds through fall and overwintering birds until the next spring arrives and the show begins again. These plants grow best in dry to moist soils and full to part sun.

Your 25-plant plug kit includes five species that thrive in sunny gardens and wet conditions. The kit includes:

- Boneset, *Eupatorium perfoliatum*, 5 plugs
- Cardinal Flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*, 5 plugs
- Hairy Beardtongue, *Penstemon hirtus*, 5 plugs
- Helmet Skullcap, *Scutellaria integrifolia*, 5 plugs
- Obedient Plant, *Physostengia 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.

Cover Photo Credits: R.W. Smith, Public Domain, Fritz Flohr Reynolds, Alan Cressler, Public Domain

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

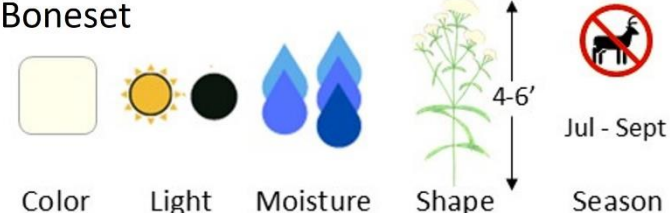
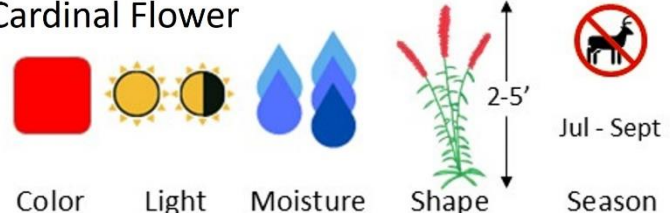
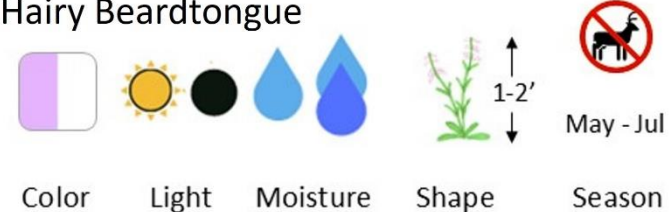
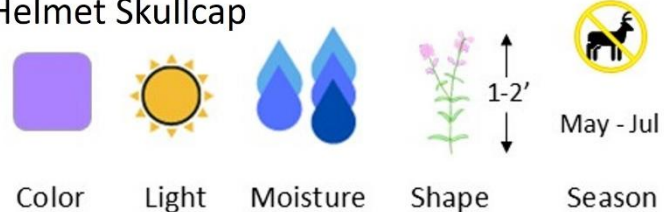
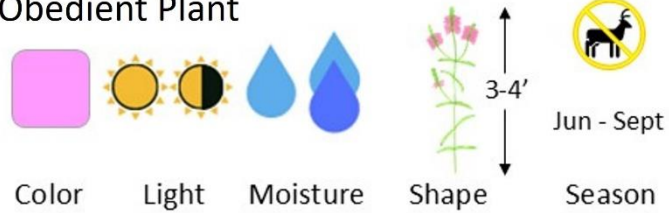
This design can be easily altered to fit a deeper, wider, or curved garden bed. These designs use moderate 10-12-inch center-to-center plant spacings to easily fill a 80 or 50 square foot area. The goal is to eventually have plants pressing shoulder to shoulder for easier maintenance. Tightly spaced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

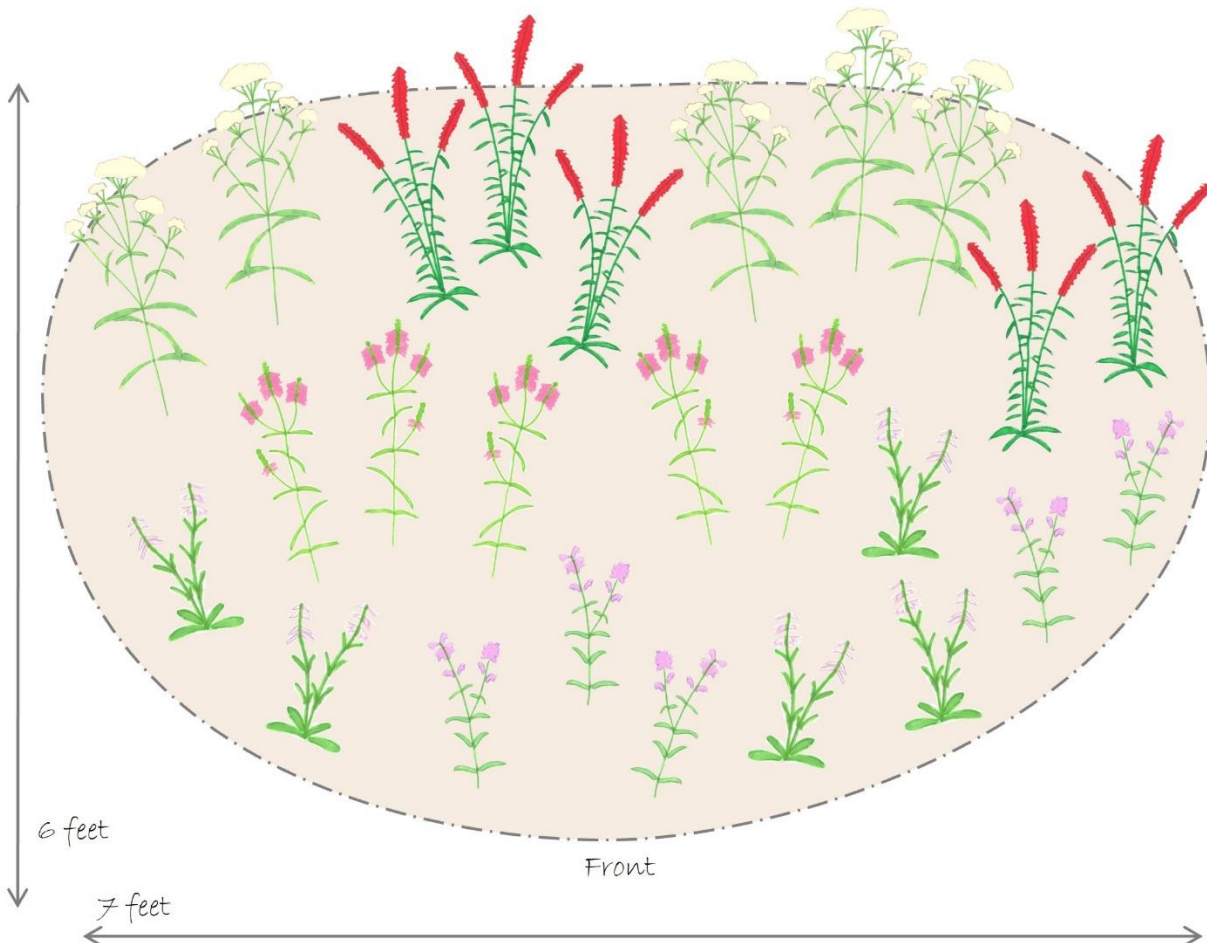
Add On!

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

Designing your garden: Sample Moist Sun Garden 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>Boneset</p>  <p>Color Light Moisture Shape Season</p> <p>Jul - Sept</p>	<p>Cardinal Flower</p>  <p>Color Light Moisture Shape Season</p> <p>Jul - Sept</p>
<p>Hairy Beardtongue</p>  <p>Color Light Moisture Shape Season</p> <p>May - Jul</p>	<p>Helmet Skullcap</p>  <p>Color Light Moisture Shape Season</p> <p>May - Jul</p>
<p>Obedient Plant</p>  <p>Color Light Moisture Shape Season</p> <p>Jun - Sept</p>	



Site Preparation

Know your sun, moisture, and soil conditions

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

These species grow well in moist 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.

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

Boneset



Flowers: July - Sept
Light: Sun to Shade
Moisture: Moist to Wet
Height: 4-6 ft

Naturally found in wet meadows and riverbanks, common boneset will do well in a rain garden or other moist areas. Its small, fragrant white flowers bloom in fall, occasionally reaching six feet or taller. Can spread through seeds as well as underground rhizomes. It is deer and rabbit resistant due to low amounts of toxic chemicals in its leaves. Larval host plant to a variety of moths and butterflies. Sun to shade, moist to wet soils. Photo credit R.W. Smith.

Cardinal Flower



Flowers: July - Sept
Light: Sun to Part Shade
Moisture: Moist to Wet
Height: 2-5 ft

Showy, scarlet-red spikes of flowers reaching 2-5 feet tall bloom July through September. A late-summer nectar source used especially by hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies. Short lived perennial but will repopulate if seed meets slightly disturbed soil. Sun to part shade, moist to wet soil.

Hairy Beardtongue



Flowers: May - July
Light: Sun to Shade
Moisture: Dry to Moist
Height: 1-2 ft

Lower-growing, 1-2 foot tall beardtongue blooms in early summer with long, tubular pink and white flowers that are attractive to hummingbirds and other pollinators. In Fall, its leaves will turn fiery red. Larval host plant to Baltimore Checkerspot and is a good nectar source for bumblebees. It prefers dry to moist soils and will grow in sun or shade. Photo credit Fritz Flohr Reynolds.

Helmet Skullcap



Flowers: May - July
Light: Sun
Moisture: Moist to Wet
Height: 1-2 ft

Beautiful, purple snapdragon-like blooms appear late spring and into summer, often pollinated by bees. Shorter-statured, helmet skullcap typically does not reach higher than two feet. Prefers wetter soil, growing best in moist to wet soils and full sun. Photo credit Alan Cressler.

Obedient Plant



Flowers: June - Sept
Light: Sun to Part Sun
Moisture: Dry to Moist
Height: 3-4 ft

Spikes of tubular, 2-lipped foxglove-like pink flowers bloom in summer. Showy, long-lasting blooms 3-4 feet high are great for cut flowers. Nectar source for bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Host to Henry's elfin butterfly. Sun to part sun, dry to moist soil.

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

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