



Mid-Atlantic Ecological Landscapes

MAE scapes

ENTRANCE GARDEN

Right Plant, Right Place

This attractive garden greets visitors every day. Lawn was transformed into a native perennial garden to provide seasonal beauty and serve as an example of ecological gardening with natives.

The new ecosystem is visited by birds, insects, amphibians and other wildlife.

All About Natives

What is a Native Plant?

A native plant species is one that occurred naturally in a particular region before the European settlement of America.

Why Plant Natives?

- Increased development means loss of habitat for native plants. Many are currently identified as rare or uncommon. By planting natives in our gardens we can help to preserve the area's natural rich diversity.
- Wildlife depends on native plants. Research shows 96% of all native insects can feed only on native plants and 90% of all terrestrial birds need insects to feed their young. Native plants provide migrating species with the fuel and resting areas they require. The disappearance of native plants means the disappearance of birds and other wildlife.
- When carefully selected plants match the site conditions, natives thrive without the addition of pesticides or fertilizers. As a result of wise planning, this site requires significantly less water and less maintenance than turf grass.
- Some non-native species can be invasive. They have few or no naturally occurring enemies to control them such as insects or competing species. Invasive plants can spread rapidly and out-compete or smother native vegetation.

Site Conditions

The Entrance Garden faces west, receives intense afternoon sun and is exposed to strong winds. Heat and light reflect off the building, making this microclimate hot and dry. The soils are highly compacted and contain low-quality subsoils containing construction debris. The area receives salt from de-icing products and winter thaws produce crushing snow loads falling from the roof.

Plant Communities

Plants do best and require less maintenance when combined with plants that have similar cultural needs. Combining plants that might grow together in nature is even better.

Plants in this garden are well-adapted for the unusually tough conditions. Some selected plants are *Eupatorium hyssopifolium*, Hyssop-leaved Thoroughwort; *Monarda fistulosa*, Bee-balm and *Symphotrichum oblongifolium*, Aromatic Aster.



Above: *Penstemon smallii*, blooming. *Heliopsis helianthoides*, Smooth Oxeye, adds a burst of yellow. Our only native cactus, *Opuntia humifusa*, Eastern Prickly Pear, is well suited to this site.



Above: *Monarda fistulosa*, Wild Bergamot, provides pollen and nectar for a foraging Bumble bee. Bumble bees are beneficial insects, performing unexcelled pollinating services for crops and other plants.



Benefits

Native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants provide natural beauty and are vital to a healthy, functional ecosystem.



This type of garden is a great alternative to a traditional lawn. It requires no fertilizers, pesticides or mowing.



The plants chosen for this garden are adapted to its hot, dry conditions. Once established they need no extra water.



Native plants provide essential food, shelter and nesting sites for wildlife.

Establishment and Maintenance

Plants are spaced closer together in ecological landscapes. Tighter spacing enables plants to cover ground quickly, reducing the need for weeding.

Garden cleanup is delayed until early spring. Why? Plants left standing through the winter serve as a seed source and shelter for wildlife and preserve overwintering sites for beneficial insects. Spring cleanup involves cutting dead foliage, breaking it into pieces and leaving it on the ground to act as mulch and a source of nutrients.

Left: The fruit of *Amelanchier canadensis*, Canadian Serviceberry, provides nourishment to birds and wildlife in late spring.

