



Mid-Atlantic Ecological Landscapes

MEADOW GARDEN

Creating a Place for the Good Guys

What is Integrated Pest Management (IPM)?

Integrated Pest Management is the sustainable practice of using a variety of cultural, biological and chemical techniques to manage insects and plant diseases. One goal of IPM is to reduce any harmful impact chemicals may have on wildlife and on soil and water quality.

IPM methods include proper plant selection, biological pest controls, using traps for monitoring insect populations and regularly examining plants for signs of trouble. Pesticides should be used as a last resort and applied at the most vulnerable time in an insect's life cycle.

Meadows naturally occur in sunny spots throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. This MAEscapes meadow garden is designed to mimic a natural meadow, but uses more flowers and fewer grasses. This type of garden can be designed to complement any landscape. Once established, perennial meadows provide year-round interest and economic benefits. Less lawn to mow

means lower equipment and fuel costs, as well as improved air quality. Planting a meadow garden in your yard will help restore important native vegetation and vital wildlife habitat that has been lost to urban sprawl.



Conserve Natural Enemies

Insects are an important part of a meadow garden. Many do important pest management work for you. These useful insects, mites and spiders are referred to as "natural enemies" or "beneficial insects". In a diverse landscape, there are usually plenty of beneficials already at work, quietly keeping pest populations at tolerable levels. To encourage natural enemies in the landscape, maintain a habitat that allows beneficials to survive and reproduce.



Above: The native meadow grass *Schizachyrium scoparium*, Little Bluestem, is beautiful in the winter. Aphids are a favorite food of the Convergent Lady Beetle. The Wheel Bug, with its bizarre appearance and deadly beak, is one of the largest assassin bugs. Wheel bugs are beneficial insects and should be considered valuable allies. Do not handle them, however, as they can inflict a painful and lasting "bite" with their beak.

Site Conditions

The Meadow Garden receives full sun. It is very dry due to sloped conditions. The soil has been severely disturbed by development and land use. Heavy foot traffic has contributed to the densely compacted soil.

Left: The summer meadow shows beautiful colors and textures. Mixed with the grasses is *Baptisia australis*, Wild False Indigo. Above: Eastern bluebirds are primarily insect eaters who shift towards seeds and berries in colder months when insects are not available. Bluebirds find most of their food close to or on the ground.

Plant Communities

Plants do best and require less maintenance when combined with other plants that have similar soil, sun and moisture needs. Meadows are generally made up of grasses and herbaceous perennials and contain few shrubs or trees. Grouping plants that might grow together in a natural community is ideal.

Plants for this garden were chosen for their ability to withstand heat, drought, salt and drying winds. *Asclepias verticillata*, Whorled Milkweed, and *Sporobolus heterolepis*, Prairie Dropseed grass, combine with herbaceous perennials such as *Asclepias tuberosa*, Butterfly Weed, and *Allium cernuum*, Nodding Onion, to create a striking, yet durable, garden.

Benefits



The native plants chosen for this site require no fertilizer. In fact, native meadow plants often do best in infertile soils. Once established, the close spacing of plants crowds out most weeds.



Diverse garden plants host a variety of insects including predators and parasites. These beneficial insects are a natural control that prevents destructive insects from overpopulating the environment, eliminating the need for pesticides.



The deep roots of meadow grasses and flowers trap, clean and filter rainwater and runoff. Meadows are vital links to cleaner and healthier watersheds.



Meadow gardens increase biodiversity. Native vegetation provides seasonal food, nesting sites and cover for a host of wildlife, particularly ground dwelling birds.

Establishment and Maintenance

Meadows require considerably less care than a traditional lawn. A newly planted meadow garden will require water and some hand weeding until established. This MAEscapes garden is cut back once a year in early spring. The cuttings are removed and composted off site. Removing the plant material prevents the soil from becoming too rich for the meadow plants. The use of pesticides is not necessary.