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Why should I garden with native plants?

Native plants make beautiful, functional and environmentally smart additions to any type of garden. For starters, native plants and animals are part of a region's web of life. All living organisms are interdependent and a part of this complex system. The quality of the air we breathe, the soil in which we grow our food and the water we drink is affected by the health of this natural system. As more land is developed for roads, industry and homes, we are altering the balance of this web.

By planting native plant gardens, you can help to preserve the native plants that are disappearing from our natural areas as well as create small oases for the wildlife in our neighborhoods. Combined, each of your individual efforts can offset the major changes we are causing in our region and begin to repair the web of life. You can make a difference!

Native plants have many advantages. You'll need to begin by choosing the right native plants for your site, buying healthy ones and planting them properly. Once you do so, you'll find that natives are well-adapted to our climate, with built-in resilience to temperature and rainfall fluctuations. When planted in the proper situation, native plants require minimal maintenance.

Many native plants also attract more wildlife, such as birds and butterflies. Creating favorable habitats for these creatures will help the environment and make your garden a livelier place to enjoy.

Perhaps a bit less obvious is that native plants can provide a sense of place, for the garden and for the gardener. A landscape rooted in native plants creates a regional imprint; a sense that it belongs here, not just anywhere.

Quite naturally, you may associate native plants and wildflowers with an informal landscape style, but many native plants fit in a more formal setting as well. As you learn more about native plants and the communities, or plant associations, in which they naturally grow, you'll get plenty of "design" ideas from nature.