# Adding Native Plants to Your Garden

Native plants are a great choice for an environmentally-friendly and sustainable garden. They support local birds and butterflies, conserve water, and require less intensive maintenance. Still, some native plants will do better in your garden than others. Below are tips to consider when adding native plants to your garden:

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## When designing your landscape:

* Identify what grows well in your area. Pay attention to the different types of native plants in your area. What have you seen thriving outside your local library or in your neighbor’s yard? Each native plant is adapted to specific environmental conditions.
* Get to know your garden space. How much sunlight is there? What is the soil type? Does this area drain well, or is it often wet?
* Determine your budget for the garden, and then create a wish list of the native plants you would like to include. Find ideas on different types of native gardens (from butterfly gardens to shade-loving gardens) [here.](https://www.naturalgardennatives.com/page/Gardening-with-Natives)
* Consider how the plants will grow. Is there enough space for the plants at their mature size? Will they spread or stay put? Certain plants rapidly spread, so if you have a smaller landscape it is best to ask an expert if any of your choices may crowd out other plantings.

## Suggested time to plant native plants:

* Herbaceous plants: spring up to early summer.
* Trees and shrubs: fall, but can also be planted in the spring.
* Bulbs: late October to early November before the ground freezes.

## Preparing a garden to plant your native plants:

* Begin by clearing the area you wish to plant. Invasive plants and aggressive weeds will compete with the native plants. It’s best to start your natives off with ample space for them to become established. Black plastic or even wetted down newspaper can be used to kill off an area of turf grass or weeds before preparing it to plant.
* Compost is a natural fertilizer containing nutrients your new native plants will love. Consider amending your garden bed with compost from your own compost pile or bagged compost from your local garden center to help establish your new garden.

## Maintaining your new native garden:

While native plants are adapted to this area and do not require as much maintenance as non-natives, they should still be checked on for a few things:

* ***Water:*** Depending on how frequently it rains after you plant your garden, the amount of watering you will need to do will fluctuate. While native plants grow very deep roots, when they are first planted the roots are only as deep as the pot you took them out of and their root ball can dry out very quickly. Be sure to water routinely and deeply so that water reaches below the plant root ball. This method of watering will encourage the roots to grow downward when looking for water instead of encouraging them to grow up toward the surface where they will dry out quickly.
* ***Weeds*:** Until your plants are established, it’s best to keep them from having to compete with weeds. The need to weed will decrease as your native plants grow. Shredded wood mulch helps to keep weeds at bay and also retains moisture.

## Buying native plants:

Ready to add native plants in your yard? Your local municipality, forest preserve district, or conservation organization may host annual native plant sales – keep your eye out in the spring! Chicago Living Corridors created this helpful [list of native plant sales in northeastern Illinois](https://chicagolivingcorridors.org/native-plant-sales/).

You may also contact the following grower and suppliers for native plants:

**Natural Communities Native Plants**

812 N Washington AveBatavia, IL 60510

(331)-248-1016

<https://naturalcommunities.net/>

**Possibility Place Nursery**

7548 W. Monee-Manhattan Road
Monee, Illinois 60449

(708)-534-3988

<https://www.possibilityplace.com/>

**The Growing Place**

2000 Montgomery Road

Aurora, IL 60504

(630)-820-8088

AND

25w471 Plank Road

Naperville, IL 60563

(630)-355-4000

[www.thegrowingplace.com](http://www.thegrowingplace.com)

## Be recognized for your environmentally-friendly garden:

The Conservation Foundation’s Conservation@Home program recognizes homeowners who are making environmentally-friendly choices for their home garden and landscaping. Removing invasive plants, planting native flowers and trees, and installing a rain barrel all count for certification as a Conservation@Home yard. Learn more about Conservation@Home at <https://www.theconservationfoundation.org/conservation-home/>