



About National Wildlife Week

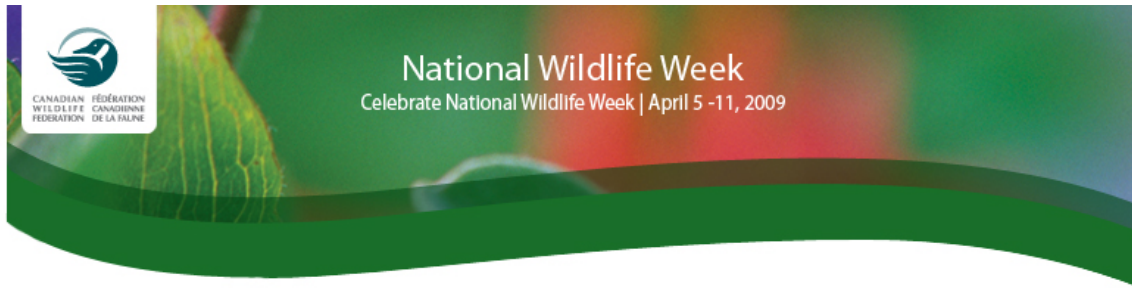
National Wildlife Week (NWW) is a program of the Canadian Wildlife Federation, sponsored in partnership with provincial and territorial governments, the Canadian Museum of Nature, Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Parks Canada and Scouts Canada.

NWW is celebrated each year during the week surrounding April 10, the birthday of Jack Miner, one of the founders of Canada's conservation movement. Proclaimed an act of Parliament in 1947, NWW is a time to celebrate Canada's natural heritage and play an active role in conservation.



Native Plants 101

- Native plants originate from North America and have the advantage of thousands of years of adaptation to Canadian conditions. Through natural selection, they have co-evolved with local wildlife and have developed defense mechanisms to survive among Canadian herbivores and insect pests without the need for harmful pesticides and fertilizers.
- By planting native species you can save both time and money. Native plants generally require less maintenance and are better able to meet the needs of local wildlife in comparison to exotic flora. Landscaping with exotic grasses and plants often requires considerable maintenance.
- Native wildflowers should not be considered weeds. They usually require less fertilizer, less irrigation and less protection from pests.
- Many cultivated plants bred for their looks have lost much of their nectar and pollen characteristics. Native plants are better suited to provide food sources for local wildlife, such as seeds for birds or nectar and pollen for pollinators. In fact, some wild animals are entirely dependent on the availability of certain native plants. Planting native habitat is sometimes the only refuge for species in increasingly urban environments.
- Without predators to keep populations in check, foreign species can invade Canada's wilderness, damaging vital ecosystems. For example, some wildflower seed mixes contain exotic species that could potentially be invasive. CWF's Invasive Species Encyclopedia lists invasive species in Canada and provides information about country origins, where they can be found in Canada and the damage they can do to our wildlife. Learn more by visiting cwf-fcf.org and clicking on resources.
- There are thousands of species of native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, grass, ferns, vines, ground cover and aquatic plants in all regions of Canada. Learn more about native species with CWF's online plant encyclopedia. Research your region. Find out what plants are native to your area and which wildlife species depend on them.
- There are thousands of native plants to choose from in Canada. The Native Plant Encyclopedia will help you track down which plants will naturally thrive in your backyard, making gardening a breeze. To access this resource, visit CWF's WildAboutGardening.org.



Top Five Reasons You Should Grow Native

1. Native plants are better suited to meet the needs of local wildlife.

They provide valuable food sources and shelter for wildlife. Many domestic flowers have been bred for showiness and may have lost much of their nectar and pollen characteristics. Flowers that have been cultivated to have tightly bunched, frilly flowers also make it more difficult for insects to access their nectar.

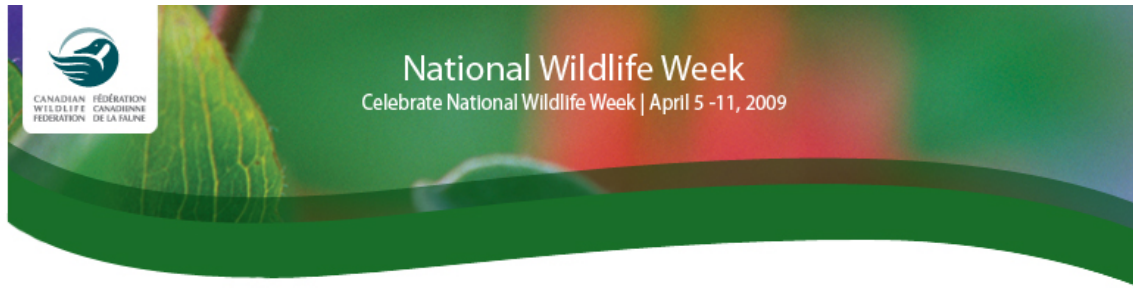
2. Some wildlife species are entirely dependent on the availability of certain native plants.

Local wildlife evolved not in isolation, but with the native vegetation. This wildlife has adapted to depend on the existing plant life. While some wildlife species are flexible in their choice of food plants, others are dependent on the availability of a specific plant for their survival. The Karner blue butterfly, for example, is endangered because of the disappearance of its larval host plant, wild lupine. By choosing plants native to your region you support local wildlife.

3. Native plants require less maintenance. Plants native to the region are adapted to the local environment and therefore require less care in the form of fertilizer and irrigation.

4. Native plants are less susceptible to disease and pests. They have evolved with local insects and plants, developing defenses that allow them to coexist. As plants are domesticated, they become more susceptible to disease, insect pests and weeds, and are therefore more dependent on the use of pesticides and other chemicals for survival.

5. Support NWW, Our Home and Native Plants, from April 5 to 11, 2009. This is your opportunity to celebrate our country's natural heritage and play a supportive role in its conservation. When we think about wildlife, we tend to think about wild animals. However, many animals couldn't survive without the food and shelter provided by plants. Canada has thousands of identified native plant species. But more than a quarter of them could be lost forever if we don't do something to conserve them. Join CWF and its partners as we celebrate National Wildlife Week.



How do Native Plants Help Wildlife?

Native plants provide valuable food sources and shelter for wildlife and some wildlife species are entirely dependent on the availability of certain native plants. While some wildlife species are flexible in their choice of food plants, others are dependent on the availability of a specific plant for their survival. By choosing plants native to your region you support local wildlife.

Many wildlife species depend on the presence of native vegetation for their survival, including rare and endangered species. Butterflies, songbirds, shorebirds, waterfowl and mammals are at risk because of disappearing habitat. For example:

- Turning native prairie grasslands into farmland has put the swift fox on the endangered list as the fox's habitat has vastly diminished.
- The least bittern is threatened in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick since invasive plant species have been introduced and humans have started draining wetlands and tampering with shorelines.
- Manitoba prairie skinks are endangered due to agriculture, urbanization and road construction, eradicating the mixed grass prairies and sandy soil they survive on.
- The Eastern prickly pear cactus has been listed as endangered partly due to logging, farming, using fertilizers and herbicides, and collecting the plant for horticultural uses.
- Destroying grassy meadows has put the golden paintbrush on the endangered list.
- Since goldenseal has been harvested for medicinal purposes, its numbers have dwindled and this beautiful plant is now threatened. Moreover, it's losing its habitat from timber production, urban development and farming.



How to Make a Difference in Your Own Backyard

More people are taking an interest in ecological and wildlife-friendly gardening by incorporating native plants into their green spaces. By creating a diverse and beautiful garden full of native plant species, you will attract wildlife and enhance your gardening experience. Creating cleaner soil, water and air makes for a healthier environment for both humans and wildlife.

How to Choose Native Plants for Your Garden

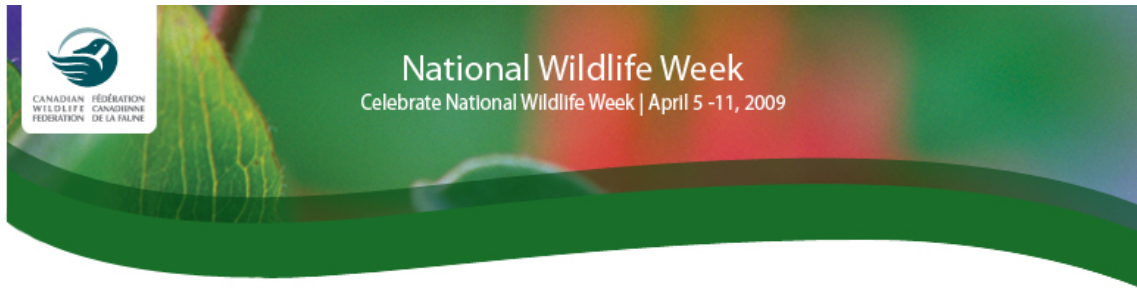
When selecting plants for your garden, it is important to choose plants whose natural environment can be duplicated in your backyard. A plant that is native to your area but put in the wrong location will not flourish. Take some time to study the existing vegetation on your land and in wild areas around your neighbourhood for ideas as to what types of plants might do well in your yard. Consider where the plant would grow in the wild, focusing on such factors as soil, available moisture, sunlight and wind. Then choose a location in your yard that would provide the same conditions.



Where to Acquire Native Plants

Once you have decided to add some native plants to your yard, the question becomes where to find them? The following are some suggestions for obtaining native plants for your garden:

- **The best source for native plants is a good local nursery.** Find one with knowledgeable staff who can help you in obtaining regionally-native nursery-propagated plants. For a list of nurseries in your region use our native plant suppliers list, which can be found on our *Wild About Gardening* website at **WildAboutGardening.org**.
- **Choose plants that are native to your region.** Just because a plant is promoted as "native" or as a "wildflower" does not mean it is native to your region. Ask questions and ensure that the plant is regionally native.
- **Ensure the plants you buy are nursery-propagated.** This means that they are grown by the nursery and not collected from the wild. Mass collections from the wild put native plant populations under threat of extinction. The already fragile existence of endangered plants, such as the small whorled pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*) in southern Ontario, and the small white lady's slipper (*Cypripedium candidum*) in southern Manitoba and Ontario, is jeopardized when pressure is intensified through collection.
- **Do not dig plants from the wild.** Many of our native plants are becoming threatened through loss of habitat, habitat destruction, and collection. Don't put further pressure on native populations by collecting plants from the wild. The one exception to this rule is on lots which have been slated for development and where the existing vegetation will be destroyed. Be sure to get permission from the landowner before you dig up any plants.
- **Ensure seeds are from a local source.** When buying wildflower seeds, ensure the seeds are from a local source and that the wildflowers are regional. Some seed mixes contain non-native flowers from other regions which could be considered noxious in your area. Regional seeds are more likely to be adapted to the local climate. Seeds that originated in the southern United States may not thrive in the cold climate of Canada.
- **Plant exchanges.** Check the gardening or community events sections of your local newspaper for plant exchanges.



For more information about native plants and simple ways you can help conserve wildlife, visit CWF's *Wild About Gardening* website at **WildAboutGardening.org**.