



\*\*This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/native-plants-garden>

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## **How to incorporate native plants in the garden**

K-State horticulture expert says native plants promote biodiversity

*K-State Research and Extension news service*

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Restoring biodiversity in a home garden or any area can be done by incorporating native plants, said Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini.

“Native plants promote biodiversity by limiting the amount of maintenance needed while providing food and housing for wildlife,” Domenghini said.

Native plants are adapted to a specific area, according to Domenghini. A native landscape has balance between the animals and plants, enabling them to co-exist. Once established, native plants require less supplemental water, fertilizer, pest management and overall maintenance than non-natives.

“Less human interference equals greater biodiversity,” Domenghini said. “Native habitats are beneficial as a food source for wildlife.”

Some species of wildlife are non-specific in the types of plants they prefer, while others require certain types of plants.

“Incorporating a variety of native plants will encourage more diversity of wildlife to your landscape,” Domenghini said.

Native plants to consider for a landscape include Bee Balm, Witch Hazel, False Indigo and Serviceberry.

“Bee balm grows 2-3 feet tall and wide,” Domenghini said. “The tubular-shaped pink and purple blooms appear in June through August attracting bees, hummingbirds and butterflies.” The leaves have also been used for herbal teas.

Witch Hazel grows best in the fall and winter, blooming yellow flowers that are great for feeding bees, Domenghini added.

“This large shrub can reach 15-20 feet and prefers a moist, shaded location,” she said.

False indigo is a perennial that reaches more than three feet in height and width.

“It prefers full sun and is a nitrogen fixer. The lovely summer blooms are inviting to butterflies and bees,” Domenghini said.

Serviceberry is native to eastern Kansas and produces fruit that resembles the taste of blueberries in mid-summer.

Domenghini suggests the following tips when adding native plants to a garden:

- Choose plants that naturally grow in the habitats available in your landscape, considering shade, wind, slope, and more.
- Use the local native plant organizations for region-specific advice.
- Purchase native plants locally from a reputable source.
- Manage the native landscape with as little interference as possible, including no fertilizer or herbicides.

“There is no need to remove exotic or alien plants from the landscape unless they are problematic to the goals of the area,” Domenghini said. “There is certainly room for introduced plants that bring you joy alongside regional natives.”

Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a [weekly Horticulture Newsletter](#) with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens.

Interested persons can subscribe to the newsletter, as well as send their garden and yard-related questions to [hortsupport@ksu.edu](mailto:hortsupport@ksu.edu), or contact your [local K-State Research and Extension office](#).

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**FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS:** Links used in this story

K-State Horticulture Newsletter, <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html>

K-State Research and Extension local offices, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html>

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