

NATIVE WILDFLOWERS & GRASSES FOR SUNNY, DRY AREAS IN SW MICH

These prairie and savanna plants are native to our area unless otherwise noted; however, this is by no means an exhaustive list of southwest Michigan's wildflowers and grasses. Heights are approximate and based on my own observation and various nursery catalogs. Many factors influence a plant's height, including soil, water, location (exposure, amount of sun or shade), and competition. Plants, once they are established, that prefer conditions drier than mesic are marked with an asterisk (*).

The smaller a wildflower or grass, the greater number needed to make an impact—or even be visible—in a planting. Arrange small plants in same-species groups of at least three (ideally, more) and medium-sized plants in groups of three. With larger plants, e.g., cup plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*) you may want only one or two per planting. For the sake of pollinators, you may want larger single-species clumps than I have suggested; large clumps make foraging easier and more efficient for them.

Locate short plants at the edges of plantings/beds and next to paths/sidewalks, so they'll be in somewhat less competition with taller plants. Generally, tall plants belong at the backs of beds or in the center or perhaps at the ends of islands, with short plants at front edges and medium-tall plants in between. But by mixing things up a little, you can make beds more interesting. Put a rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) or compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*) near the front of a bed, where its basal leaves won't overwhelm short plants but its tall flowerstalk will rise well—and dramatically—above them.

SHORT PLANTS (2 ft. and under).

Allium cernuum (Nodding wild onion)

**Anemone patens wolfgangiana* (Pasque flower)—not native this side of Lake Michigan. Earliest prairie bloomer.

Asclepias verticillata (Whorled milkweed)

**A. viridiflora* (Green milkweed)

Aster ericoides (Heath aster)

**Aster sericeus* (Silky aster)

Blephilia ciliata (Downy wood mint)

Bouteloua curtipendula (Side-oats grama)—A delicate grass with minute red flowers.

**Campanula rotundifolia* (Harebell)

Fragaria virginiana (Wild strawberry)

Geum triflorum (Prairie smoke)

Heuchera richardsonii (Prairie alumroot)

**Koeleria cristata* (June Grass)—Best in sand, full sun. Very attractive.

**Liatris cylindracea* (Cylindrical blazing star)

Lithospermum canescens (Hoary puccoon)—Best in sand

**L. caroliniense* (Hairy or yellow puccoon)—Best in sand

**Lupinus perennis* (Wild lupine)—Best in sand.

**Monarda punctata* (Spotted bee-balm)

**Opuntia humifusa* (Prickly-pear cactus)—Best in sand.

Penstemon hirsutus (Hairy beard-tongue)

Phlox pilosa (Prairie or downy phlox)

Senecio plattensis (Prairie ragwort)

Sisyrinchium angustifolium (Stout blue-eyed grass)

Sporobolus heterolepis (Prairie dropseed)—The leaves of the grass form a very low cushion; flowerstalks rise a couple of feet above it, but are so fine in texture as to be almost invisible.

**Tephrosia virginiana* (Goat's rue)—Best in sand and full sun.

**Viola pedata* (Bird's foot violet)

SOMEWHAT TALLER PLANTS (About 3 ft. or under).

Amorpha canescens (Leadplant)—shrub; may occasionally be somewhat taller.

Anemone cylindrica (Thimbleweed)

Aquilegia canadensis (Wild columbine)—biennial

**Asclepias amplexicaulis* (Sand milkweed)

A. hirtella (Tall green milkweed)

A. tuberosa (Butterfly weed)—Prefers sandy soil.

Aster oolentangiensis [*Aster azureus*] (Sky-blue aster)

Aster pilosus (Frost aster)

Baptisia leucophaea (Cream wild indigo)

Ceanothus americanus (New Jersey tea)—shrub. May be taller when well established.

Coreopsis lanceolata (Lance-leaved coreopsis, sand coreopsis, tickseed coreopsis)

Echinacea purpurea (Purple coneflower)

Euphorbia corollata (Flowering spurge)
Helianthus occidentalis (Western sunflower)—Slender, bare flowerstalks rising over basal rosettes.
Liatris aspera (Rough blazing star)
Potentilla fruticosa (Shrubby cinquefoil)—shrub
 *Penstemon grandiflorus (Large-flowered penstemon)—native further west but spectacular.
Rudbeckia hirta (Black-eyed Susan)
Schizachyrium scoparium [Andropogon scoparius] (Little bluestem)—a short, beautiful, well-behaved grass.
Silene stellata (Starry campion)
Tradescantia ohiensis (Ohio spiderwort)
Zizia aurea (Golden Alexander)

MODERATELY TALL PLANTS (At least 3 ft., but not over 5 ft.). Plants that send up a single flowerstalk or whose flowerstalks rise on more or less bare stems above significantly lower foliage can successfully combine with shorter plants.

Asclepias syriaca (Common milkweed)
Aster laevis (Smooth blue aster)
Aster novae-angliae (New England aster)
Baptisia lactea [B. leucantha] (white wild indigo)—Flowerstalks rise well above foliage.
Cassia hebecarpa (Wild senna)—May not tolerate conditions drier than mesic.
Desmanthus illinoensis (Illinois bundleflower)—native as close as northern Indiana.
Desmodium canadense (Showy tick-trefoil)
Echinacea pallida (Pale-purple coneflower)—native west of Mich. Stiff, bare flowerstalks rise well above foliage.
Elymus virginicus (Virginia wild rye)—a very graceful grass.
Eryngium yuccifolium (Rattlesnake Master). Flowerstalk rises well above basal rosette.
Helianthus mollis (Downy sunflower)
Parthenium integrifolium (Wild quinine)—native in Indiana but not in Michigan.
Penstemon digitalis (Foxglove beard-tongue)
Ratibida pinnata (Gray-headed coneflower, yellow coneflower)
Rudbeckia triloba (Brown-eyed Susan)
Silene regia (Royal catchfly)—native in Indiana and Illinois but not in Michigan.
Silphium integrifolium (Rosinweed)
Solidago rigida (Stiff goldenrod)
Solidago speciosa (Showy goldenrod)
Sporobolus heterolepis (Prairie or northern dropseed)—Forms a low cushion from which rise tall, delicate flowerstalks. A most attractive grass.
 *Verbena stricta (Hoary vervain)
Veronicastrum virginicum (Culver's root)

TALL PLANTS (Over 5 ft.). Generally, appropriate for the back of the bed/border or the middle/ends of island plantings. However, placing a few in an area of considerably shorter plants creates an interesting, dramatic, even natural-looking effect.

Andropogon gerardii (Big bluestem)—Aggressive
Cacalia atriplicifolia (Pale Indian plantain)
Coreopsis tripteris (Tall coreopsis)—Aggressive
Desmodium illinoense (Illinois tick-trefoil)
Silphium laciniatum (Compass plant)—Big leaves only at base, single flowerstalk. Must have full sun.
Silphium terebinthinaceum (Prairie dock)—Big leaves at base, slender bare flowerstalks.
Silphium perfoliatum (Cup plant)—In soil rich in organic material, together with partial shade, may tolerate conditions slightly drier than mesic.
Sorghastrum nutans (Indian grass)—Aggressive

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KALAMAZOO
 AREA CHAPTER

kazoo_wild_ones@sbcglobal.net
 kalamazoowildones.org National: wildones.org
 PO Box 20324, Kalamazoo MI, 49019