

# Plant Local

Native planting means choosing blooms and bushes that grow in your area on their own. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says native plantings are already adapted to your climate and soil conditions and provide important nectar, pollen and seeds to native fauna. They do not require fertilizers, need fewer pesticides, are less thirsty and can prevent erosion, may not require mowing, and promote biodiversity.

## **Know Your Zone**

The first step to native planting is to know your planting zone. The USDA maintains the map, which is available online. Before you leave for your local nursery or garden store, look up your address on the map and determine your plant hardiness zone.

## **Location, Location, Location**

Look around your yard. Observe the places where you want to plant and how many hours of sun and shade those spots get.

Does water pool there? Is it dry? What's the soil like? Is it close to your house or driveway? What native plants are around you? What's your budget? These are all questions the plant experts at your local garden store will ask.

## **Be Patient**

Remember, this is a marathon. Native plants may take a year or so to get established and grow into their new habitat, the USDA warns. When you plant, you'll also need to leave room for the plants to grow and propagate. If the gaps in your garden are killing you, ask your garden center about potted plants or small garden sculptures you can easily move to fill in.

## **Controlling Weeds and Invasive Species**

While you're at the nursery center, talk to the experts there about weed control and invasive species to look for. Especially if you're reusing beds that were planted with invasive species before, you may have your hands full for a couple of years. Weed control techniques to consider are pulling them by hand, using environmentally friendly mulches to suppress weeds among young plants, and the careful use of herbicides.



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