

Evolution of a Natural Style:

Jens Jensen, Aldo Leopold, Eloise Butler, Hal Bruce, Sara Stein, Sally & Andy Wasowski and others

The University of Wisconsin Arboretum in Madison was the first prairie restoration

DESIGNING & PLANTING A GARDEN WITH NATURE

Inventory what Nature you already have

Note existing trees, shrubs, vines, and herbaceous plants (think in layers from canopy “ceiling” to groundcover “floor”)

Note the Earth: rocks or outcrops, slopes/terrain, soil types, water/moisture regimes; learn to know your niche!

Analyze the Situation

Make use of what you have! Embrace your place for best results. A wet or any other problematic site is a resource. What is your habitat?

Know your directions for sun and moonlight, prevailing winds and changes of each season.

Put together a Plan

Plans focus your resources to be used wisely.

Plants (the building blocks of all life)

Prepare a list

What native plants will thrive on your site in your soils and conditions? What are your favorite plants – they always uplift the spirit and should be utilized. Delete all invasive exotic plants.

If you Plant it, they will come!

Each plant supports a host of animals in various ways from food to shelter.

Animals to complete the Web of Life

List those you wish to attract

Favorite animals that are realistic to attract (based on your context/location)

*Some animals may be a nuisance: deer, voles, raccoons, some rabbits, squirrels, woodchucks

So think how they impact the whole environment and your neighbors

Research what they need

Learn the plants and structures required to attract your “wish list” animals.

What does bird food look like? (Tallamy) remember that insects are the building blocks

Add this to the Plan

Locate plants and structures on your site where the plants will thrive, the structures will fit and always think about it from your perspective: where you walk, sit (both indoors and out).

Water

All life needs water to survive. A water feature that provides water for animals is a simply a garden gem. Utilize plants adapted to your site conditions so you won't have to waste water to

maintain them. Once established, your plantings should survive without extra watering except in cases of severe drought.

Prepare to Plant with Gardening with Nature in mind

Blend with the neighbors

A clean edge that defines a bed as purposeful is a must.

Certify your natural garden and sign it: Wild Ones, The National Wildlife Federation, North American Butterfly Association and Monarch Watch all provide signs and certification.

Planting techniques

Utilize the natural soil profile wherever possible – there's a host of microfauna there on your side. Condition clay soils with organic matter (compost). Compost feeds our alive soils!

Tips on maintenance

Prune only as necessary, consider leaving dead limbs or trees as common sense allows.

Leave dead herbaceous plants stand through winter, chop in place for mulch.

Where do your animals go in winter? Specific host plants may need special attention.

Organic Gardening

Most bugs are beneficial so always just target pests once they reach a threshold of damage – spot spray, or use preventative applications with organic pesticides as needed. Always use the minimum amount, least environmentally damaging, and target the pest specifically.

Use fertilizers only as necessary, and use organic or slow release whenever possible.

Top Plants for a Garden Filled with Nature

Shade Trees

Oak (*Quercus* spp.): the frame of civilization and structural support for the web of life...

Dare to consider a Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)

Cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides*) have a place but use common sense!

Evergreen Trees

The one, the only: Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)

American Holly is worth the wait (*Ilex opaca*)

Eastern White Pine is still the best...(*Pinus strobus*)

Small and Understory Trees and Large Shrubs

Willows are wonderful but carefully select which one and where you plant it.

Dare to plant a Midwestern Icon: American Plum (*Prunus americana*)

Hophornbeam: ironwood says it all (*Ostrya virginiana*)

Evergreen Shrubs

Giant Cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) is the closest native (there are NO local evergreen shrubs)

Yews (*Taxus*): select female cultivars for berries for wildlife.

Evergreen Azaleas (*Rhododendron*) provide springtime nectar.

Deciduous Shrubs

Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*)

Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)

Blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.) provide nectar and berries for you too!

Vines

Grapes (*Vitis* spp.) provide nectar, and fruit for you and the wildlife.

Greenbrier (*Smilax* spp.) provides cover, nectar and berries for the birds.

Trumpet Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)

Perennials

Spring bloomers: sun, shade and in between!

Summer bloomers

Fall bloomers

Groundcovers

Tough turf and don't forget the clover! Are dandelions all that bad?

Unmown types provide winter cover for a host of un-noticed creatures.

Woodland Grasses

Sedges have edges

(forget the Vinca and the English Ivy)

Bulbs

What do daffodils do? Watch the squills. Think outside the tulips!

Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)

Trillium (*Trillium sessile* is locally native)

Wild Hyacinths (*Camassia scilloides*)

Annuals & Biennials

American Basketflower (*Centaurea americana*) always pleases

Know your thistles (*Cirsium altissimum* and *C. discolor*) Several are good guys!

Partridge Pea (*Cassia/Chamaecrista fasciculata*) is abuzz with life.

Black-eyed-Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta* and cultivars)

Zinnias

Wildlife Plants Ranked (number of animal species that utilize them)

Shade Trees:

Oaks (*Quercus*) 263

Wild Cherries (*Prunus*) 104

Maples (*Acer*) 61

Hackberry (*Celtis*) 54

Birch (*Betula*) 52

Evergreen Trees:

Pine (*Pinus*) 234

Redcedar (*Juniperus*) 66

Spruce (*Picea*) 36

Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga*)

Holly (*Ilex*)

Small Trees/Large Shrubs:

Dogwoods (*Cornus*) 75

Elderberry (*Sambucus*) 51

Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*) 46

Sumac (*Rhus*) 46

Willow (*Salix*) 37

Shrubs:

Blackberry (*Rubus*) 118

Prickly-pears (*Opuntia*) 62

Blueberries (*Vaccinium*) 57

Coral & Snowberries (*Symphoricarpos*) 32

Gooseberry (*Ribes*) 32

Vines:

Grapes (*Vitis*) 69

Poison-ivy (*Toxicodendron*) 66

Greenbrier (*Smilax*) 27

Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus*) 26

Perennials:

Bulrush (*Scirpus*) 286

Switchgrass (*Panicum*) 108

Sedges (*Carex*) 86

Sunflowers (*Helianthus*) 73

Rushes (*Juncus*) 66

Annuals:

Ragweed (*Ambrosia*) 164 rated #2 behind alien Foxtails (*Setaria*)