

## Practical Challenges of Designing with Native Plants

**Designing for Diversity:** All garden designs fall somewhere between two extremes: chaos and control. Gardeners/designers may wrongly assume that they must adopt a *naturalistic* style when using native plants. Design is all about form and function, how a plant looks and behaves, not about species. The fact that we are using "wild" plants does not mean that the garden design has to *look* wild (or even naturalistic). If we use native plants in traditional landscapes, our gardens will appeal to a wider diversity of humans and wildlife.

**Slides 6-8:** Examples of formal geometric designs that could easily be installed with native groundcovers and trees.

**Slide 9:** Round or cone shapes can suggest a formal European style: the upright *Juniperus communis* 'Hibernica', inkberry, *Ilex glabra*, and arborvitae, *Thuja occidentalis* 'Rockwood Gold'

**Slide 10:** Some perennials exhibit a formal vase shape, such as *Rudbeckia triloba*

**Slide 11:** An experimental, abstract deer-proof design showcasing dwarf varieties of native spruces and white pines

**Slide 12:** Topiaries: *Juniperus chinensis* and dwarf white spruce, *Picea glauca* 'Conica'; identical in form and function, but only the native spruce contributes ecological value

**Slides 13-17:** Examples of native plants in semi-formal settings:

A bosque or grove of bald cypresses, *Taxodium distichum*; fern hedge

Bald cypresses forming an allée

A similar effect with white pines, *Pinus strobus*, as an allée at Innisfree.

A Joe-pye, "allée" (*Eupatorium* sp.) at the Connecticut College Arboretum

The outdoor amphitheatre at Swarthmore composed using tulip trees, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, as columns.

**Slides 18-19:** Unusual "fastigate" or upright form of native trees:

black spruce; *Picea mariana* 'Fastigiata'

sweetgum, *Liquidambar styraciflua* 'Slender Silhouette.'

**Slide 20:** dwarf sweetgums, useful for compact gardens

**Slides 21-27:** Native plants appropriate for use in Asian-style gardens:

Common juniper 'Gold Cone' and *J. horizontalis*, 'Icee Blue' and dwarf hemlock, possible either 'Jeddeloh' or 'Cloud Prune'

Weeping hemlock and dwarf white spruce (bun form)

Sweetgum, *Liquidambar styraciflua* 'Gumball'

Virginia pine, *Pinus virginiana*, 'Wate's Golden'

Dwarf jack pine, *Pinus banksiana* 'Schoodic'

Dwarf pitch pine, *Pinus rigida* 'Sherman Eddy'

Pinxterbloom azalea, *Rhododendron prinophyllum*

**Slides 28-30:** Masses of herbaceous plants indicate "New American" style

Dwarf white pine 'Paul Waxman,' *Juniperus communis* 'Gold Cone', little bluestem, prairie dropseed and *Panicum* grasses;

Bluestar, *Amsonia tabernaemontana*, dwarf shrub forms of white pine and Joe-pye, *Eupatorium* sp. with Culver's root, *Veronicastrum virginicum*, at Swarthmore

**Slide 31:** little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*, purple lovegrass, *Eragrostis spectabilis*, *Panicum virgatum* and Indiangrass, *Sorghastrum nutans*

**Slide 32:** Fall color: Virginia creeper, *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*, and sourwood, *Oxydendron arborea*

**Slides 33-34:** purple plants in the landscape, *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy'; *Prunus virginiana* 'Schubert's Red'; 'Canada Red' also available

**Slide 35:** *Nyssa sylvatica* 'Sheri's Cloud'

**Slides 36-40:** Conifers in various shapes and colors, excellent for winter interest:

Creeping junipers showing winter color range from purple to blue to green; evergreen hedge using inkberry, *Ilex glabra*;

Grey Owl', a sprawling blue-tinted Eastern red-cedar, *Juniperus virginiana*;

Atlantic white cedar, *Chamaecyparis thyoides*, open-pollinated and 'Yankee Blue';

A weeping variety of white pine, possibly 'Niagara' or 'Shaggy Dog'

**Slides: 41-5:** Cottage gardens: a balance of lawn, wall or fence lends the appearance of control to the flower border.

**Slides 46-7:** low-growing, well-behaved sunlovers for a sunny front yard: *Aster ericoides* 'Snow Flurry' and purple lovegrass

**Slide 48:** Native grasses for lawn substitutes: Prairie dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis*, and Pennsylvania sedge, *Carex pensylvanica*

**Slide 49:** Front yard with minimal lawn, designed by Larry Weaner

**Slide 50:** Ferns moving into the shady front lawn

**Slides 51-3:** In the back yard, a balance of lawn and shaded flower beds prevents total chaos.

**Slides 54-55:** Formal perennial borders

**Slides 56-62:** Perennial borders: Partially shaded perennial border: Kankakee mallow, *Iliamna remota*, black-eyed Susan, *Rudbeckia hirta*, mountain mint, *Pycnanthemum muticum*, daisy fleabane, *Erigeron annuus*, Culver's root, *Veronicastrum virginicum*, *Scutellaria incana*, purple skullcap, ox-eye daisy, *Heliopsis helianthoides* 'Summer Nights', Joe-pye weed, wild senna, *Cassia marilandica*, beebalm, *Monarda* spp.; Garden phlox, *Phlox paniculata* (upper left), Joe-pye weed, *Eupatorium maculatum* 'Bartered Bride' (white) and 'Gateway' (mauve), NY ironweed, *Vernonia noveboracensis*, and cutleaf sunflower, *Rudbeckia laciniata*; woodland sunflower, *Helianthus decapetalus* (lower left).

Slides 63-67: Rain garden/mini meadow through the seasons

Slide 68: Suburban meadow with goldenrod, cardinal flower, Joe-pye and *Panicum*, Larry Weaner Design

Slide 69: Natural meadow/abandoned pasture overseeded with New England asters and *Monarda* to increase color and diversity.

Slides 70-73: *E. lupine*, *Lupinus perennis*, and little bluestem meadow

Slide 74: roadside meadow dominated by little bluestem and purple lovegrass

Slides 75-78: seasonal displays of native grasses in the front yard

Slides 79-80: Old field au natural and one mowed as a garden