

Native Landscaping Grant

The Wall Township Environmental Advisory Committee received a 50/50 grant from the NJ DEP, Environmental Services Program in the amount of \$3700 for an educational native garden project along the bike trail at the Allenwood Park.

The soil test report was analyzed by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Soil Testing Laboratory in Milltown, New Jersey. The soil was found to be loamy sand and strongly acidic. Rich Pillar, from the Wild Earth Native Plant Nursery in Freehold, was the professional native landscaper that recommended 70 varieties of native plants and who also designed the landscaped plan.

WHY NATIVE PLANTS?

Native plants were found in our area before Europeans settled (when extensive land clearing began and exotic plants were first introduced from overseas). Hundreds, if not thousands, of plants fall into this category. Many are very beautiful and are underused in our landscape.

Native plants have been growing and evolving in our area for thousands of years and, as a result, have adapted to the local soils and climate. As a result they are more likely to thrive with minimal care than exotic plants. This can mean less water, fertilizer and pesticides. Also, native plants are less likely to create environmental havoc should they “escape” from your garden, unlike aggressive exotics which can become invasive plants.

Native plants have evolved so that they have an integral place in our local ecosystem. Other plants, animals, and/or insects may require them for habitat or nutrients during all or parts of their life cycle. When natural areas are lost or cut into pieces or harmed in other ways from our activities, what’s left becomes all the more critical for the survival of many species. By using native plants we can help offset the losses.

By using a greater variety of species, you will have more varied season interest (flowers, berries, leaf colors, etc) and you will encourage a more balanced population of beneficial insects that will help keep the harmful ones in check. You will also attract more birds and butterflies to your yard.

Of course, not every native plant will thrive in every location. It’s important to know your site conditions and the requirements of the native plants when making a selection.

Finally, native plants provide that “sense of place”. In a world that is fast becoming homogenized, it’s nice to experience a place that is unique. By using native plants, especially those that only grow in your area, you help to foster that uniqueness.

ADVANTAGES OF USING NATIVE SHRUBS & PLANTINGS:

- ◆ By using native plants, we can avoid the excess use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides that are harmful to the environment in this municipality and the Manasquan Watershed area.
- ◆ By using less or no fertilizers and pesticides, we can save money, time, and energy.
- ◆ Moreover, less watering and maintenance will be required.
- ◆ These native plants will provide shelter and food for wildlife.
- ◆ We will be attracting and nourishing our wildlife; notably, birds, butterflies, and other wildlife.
- ◆ Wildlife can help to control annoying bugs and insects.
- ◆ We also will be conserving our natural resources by avoiding non-point pollution and runoff particularly to the Manasquan River.

- ◆ Most species are perennial or self-seeding biennial plants.
- ◆ Sit on our benches and enjoy the pleasure of relaxation by observing our beautiful, ecologically native garden.
- ◆ Native plants help to reduce air pollution since these natural gardens do not require mowing as lawns do.
- ◆ Native plants help to restore and replenish the land which provide for a stable ecosystem.

In addition, native plants are aesthetically pleasing to say the least.

GETTING STARTED!



- ◆ Have your soil tested. Is your garden area shady or sunny? Is the soil dry or damp? How much sand, silt, and clay is in the soil? Is your soil well drained? Is it a windy site? Knowing these answers will help you pick thriving plants for your yard or garden.
- ◆ Design your garden plan. Define your needs regarding your lawn, trees, shrubs, and ground covers.
- ◆ Visit your local native landscaper for site preparation and for a final selection of plant varieties. Remember, you are selecting native plants because they require less fertilizers and pesticides. A high use of chemicals may result in contamination and potential health problems. Long term use of pesticides may lead to cancer and other possible problems if not used cautiously.
- ◆ Revisit the benefit list. Lower costs, less maintenance, and minimal watering should be an incentive for native planting.