

## Why We Should Consider Adding Native Plants to Our Landscapes

Scarborough Conservation Commission

by Marla Zando

As we ponder our home landscapes, we can consider landscaping not just for aesthetic purposes but for increasing habitat and food sources for wildlife. Increasingly, homeowners are looking to augment the biodiversity of their properties with Maine native plants that attract birds, insects, and mammals that are also native to Maine. The plants and animals that were in the area now known as Maine, prior to European settlement, are considered native.

Why are native plants on our properties so important to our wildlife and the ecosystem that we live within? With habitat loss due to the construction of roads, bridges, and buildings, many wildlife species do not have the space they need to nest, breed, and raise their young. If wildlife cannot find what they need in a patch of habitat, they will move to find it, even to their own demise. Douglas Tallamy, a professor at the University of Delaware, writes, "...we need to restore nature to our home landscapes, to our corporate landscapes, to our municipal parks, and to as much of our infrastructure as we can, because our parks and preserves are not large enough to do the job alone."

Fortunately, native Maine plants are adapted to the local climate and will thrive if they are planted in appropriate spaces based on their needs for sunlight and water. Also, fortunate, is that native plants don't need fertilizers to grow well. They will erupt through leaf mulch in the spring without a problem, as they evolved to do. The best native plants are grown from seed collected in Maine in the wild. The Wild Seed Project website lists their classes in growing native Maine plants from seed, through venues like Maine Audubon, local adult education programs, and more. The best seed sowing time is November through February. The Wild Seed Project sells native plant seeds and both Maine Audubon and Wild Seed Project sell more mature plants during the growing season.

### Suggested Resources:

*Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens* and *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard* (<http://www.bringingnaturehome.net>) by Douglas W. Tallamy (available for purchase online and at the Scarborough Public Library)

Bringing Nature Home, a conservation project of Maine Audubon inspired by the work of Doug Tallamy and made possible by a Scarborough couple, Jim and Ann Hancock - (<https://www.maineaudubon.org/projects/plants/>) There you will find the Maine Native Plant Finder button, an online search tool to help homeowners and landscapers choose the best plants for specific properties.

Wild Seed Project website and *Wild Seed* magazine (<https://wildseedproject.net>)

**Town of Scarborough**

259 US Route One | PO Box 360 | Scarborough, ME 04070 | P: 207.730.4000 | [scarboroughmaine.org](http://scarboroughmaine.org)