

Native Plants for Clay Soils

By Jan Pettengill 1/3/15

Native plants are easy to grow and maintain. Plants native to our state will thrive without fertilizers and pesticides, and once established, will require less water due to their deep roots. Clay soil can hold water and become challenging to walk on when wet. When dry it can harden like bricks. One can amend it with compost so it will drain better. Whether the soil is amended or not, the following is a list of native plants that will thrive in clay soil.

Trees

Preferred Site

Big Toothed Aspen- *Populus grandidentata*; full sun; mesic/moist soil.

Quaking Aspen-*Populus tremuloides* ;full sun; mesic/moist.

Black Gum-*Nyssa sylvatica*; full sun to partial shade; moist to wet soil.

Red Maple-*Acer rubrum*; full sun to partial shade; wet to dry soil.

Black Spruce-*Picea Marianna*; full sun to partial shade; moist to wet soil.

Sycamore-*Platanus occidentalis*; full sun to partial shade; mesic/moist soil.

Swamp White Oak-*Quercus bicolor*; full sun to partial shade; moist to wet soil.

Black Willow-*Salix nigra*; full sun; moist to wet soil.

Shrubs

Arrowwood-*Viburnum dentatum*; full sun; moist to dry soil.

Buttonbush-*Cephalanthus occidentalis*; sun to partial shade edge of pond.

Black Chokeberry-*Aronia melanocarpa*; partial to full shade; dry to wet soil.

Elderberry-*Sambucus Canadensis*; full to partial shade; tolerates wet soil.

Over

Shrubs ContinuedPreferred Site

Labrador Tea-Ledum groenlandicum; full sun to partial shade; tolerates dry soil.

Leatherleaf-Chamaedaphne Calyculata; partial to full shade; tolerates wet soil.

Nannyberry-Viburnum lentago; full sun to full shade; wet to dry soil.

Ninebark-Physocarpus opulifolius; full sun to partial shade; tolerates dry soil.

Red Osier Dogwood-Cornus sericea (stolonifera); full sun to partial shade; likes damp areas.

Wildflowers/Grasses/Ferns

Bog Aster-A. nemoralis; more sun than shade; damp areas.

New England Aster-A. novae-angliae; more sun than shade; damp to dry soil.

Back-Eyed Susan-Rudbeckia hirta; more sun than shade; tolerates dry soil.

Ostrich Fern-Matteuccia; shaded area; mesic/moist soil.

Cinnamon Fern-Osmunda; shaded area; mesic/moist soil.

Switchgrass-panicum virgatum; full sun to partial shade; tolerates dry soil.

Nodding Pink Onion-Allium cernuum; more sun than shade; tolerates dry soil.

Little Bluestem-Schizachyrium scoparium; full sun to partial shade; tolerates dry

Boneset-Eupatorium perfoliatum; more sun than shade; likes damp areas.

Purple Coneflower-Echinacea purpurea; full sun to partial shade; tolerates dry .

Great Blue Lobelia-Lobelia siphilitica; sun tolerates shade; likes damp areas.

Indian Grass-Sorghastrum nutans ; sun to partial shade; tolerates dry soil.

Stiff Goldenrod-Solidago rigida; more sun than shade; tolerates dry soil.

Yellow Coneflower- Ratibida pinnata; full sun to partial shade; tolerates dry.

Blue Wild Indigo- Baptista australis; full sun; prefers dry soil.

Wild Ginger-Asarum canadense; prefers shade; prefers damp soil.

(A brief list of native plants suggested by several native plant growers).