



Northern Blue Flag Iris - *Iris versicolor*

Height: 2-3 feet

Flower Color: purple/blue

Bloom Period: late spring to early summer

Light Requirements: full to partial sun

Soil: wet

Northern blue flag (*Iris versicolor*) is a member of the iris family, more often seen in the wild growing in wetlands and along shorelines than in home gardens. This plant is easy and attractive to grow, especially along the margins of water features.

It is a clump-forming plant with bluish-green, sword-shaped leaves. From May to July, stalks each bear three to five violet-blue flowers with purple veining and a central yellow and white patch. The flowers span up to four inches in diameter, making them an eye-catching addition to any garden.

DO NOT INGEST - Northern blue flag is toxic to humans and pets.

Photo courtesy of [Prairie Nursery](#)



Dense Blazing Star – *Liatris spicata*

Height: 3-4 feet

Flower Color: lavender

Bloom Period: summer

Light Requirements: full sun

Soil Moisture: medium to moist

Dense blazing star (*Liatris spicata*) needs to be in soil that retains moisture well without becoming soggy. Areas that dry out regularly should be avoided if possible. The dense blazing star is tolerant of many soil types, including rocky terrain, but prefers lighter soils. Soil pH is not important if soil is well-drained, though slightly acidic soil is preferable. The dense blazing star will grow faster and bloom more abundantly in moist soils. Once established, it will tolerate drier conditions, as well as poorer quality soils, and will be a reliable, beautiful addition to your landscape.

Dense blazing star can be propagated most easily through division. Large clumpy bulbs can be dug out and separated with a sharp clean knife in the spring, just as leaves begin to emerge. Each new bulb made from the larger bulb should have at least one eye - try not to damage roots. Dividing the dense blazing star is a good way of keeping the plant healthy and avoiding over-crowding.

Dense Blazing Star photo by [Patrick Standish](#)



Nodding Wild Onion - *Allium cernuum*

Height: 1-2 feet

Flower Color: pink/lavender

Bloom Period: summer to early fall

Light Requirements: full sun

Soil Moisture: medium to moist

Benefit: deer resistant

Nodding onion is most effective when planted in small groups. Plants benefit from being divided every third year or when 8-10 bulbs appear in the clump. The bulbs can be dried for use as seasoning. Use flower bulbs to flavor soup or for pickling.

The flower clusters attract a range of pollinators, but especially bumblebees, which are more adept at gathering nectar and pollen from the required upside-down position.

The city of Chicago gets its name from the Algonquin Indian name for this plant, "chigagou".

Photo courtesy of [Prairie Nursery](#)



Indian Grass - *Sorghastrum nutans*

Height: 5-7 feet

Flower Color: gold/green

Bloom Period: late summer

Light Requirements: full sun

Soil Moisture: dry to moist

Indian grass brings a natural drama to the autumn landscape with its rich golden-bronze seed heads. One of the earliest warm season grasses to set seed, this prairie tallgrass forms upright clumps with blue-green summer foliage that turns gold in the fall. Tolerant of a wide range of soils including heavy clays, Indian grass is easily grown in dry to medium well-drained soils, and needs full sun to look its best.

Drought resistant, *Sorghastrum nutans* creates a supportive environment for wildlife, including songbirds and gamebirds. It can seed aggressively, and may not be suitable for smaller settings, but it is a good companion grass for a wide range of prairie flowers. Indian grass is a desirable component in eastern North American grasslands.

Photo courtesy of [Prairie Nursery](#)



"The world is made brighter and sunnier by flowers of such a hue...it arrays itself in this scarlet glory. It is a flower of thought and feeling, too; it seems to have its roots deep down in the hearts of those who gaze at it." Nathaniel Hawthorne

Photo courtesy of [Prairie Nursery](#)

Cardinal Flower – *Lobelia cardinalis*

Height: 2-4 feet

Flower Color: red

Bloom Period: summer

Light Requirements: partial sun to shade

Soil Moisture: moist to wet

Benefit: attracts hummingbirds

Cardinal flower blooms for a month or more in late summer, with brilliant red flowers that attract hummingbirds to your garden. Occurring naturally in wetlands, cardinal flower grows best in moist soils in full sun or light shade. A short-lived species, the parent plant will persist for a few years, but this prolific seeder can self-sow in the right conditions with good seed-to-soil contact. Otherwise, it may require replanting every few years, but is well worth the effort.

This plant is also easily propagated by dividing it in spring or fall. To do so, divide the young plants which form around the older base each year. Make sure to water them well for many weeks.

Another means of propagation is to bend down the stem down to the soil and fasten it with rocks or sticks for several weeks in the summer. This allows roots and small sets of leaves to form a new plant.



Purple Coneflower – *Echinacea purpurea*

Height: 2-3 feet

Flower Color: pink

Bloom Period: summer

Light Requirements: full to partial sun

Soil Moisture: dry to medium

Benefit: deer resistant

Purple Coneflower blooms profusely for up to two months in mid to late summer and sometimes re-blooms in the fall. Perfect for both small gardens and large prairie meadows, the showy flowers are a favorite nectar source for butterflies, bees and other pollinators, including hummingbirds. In late summer the large seed heads attract Goldfinches and other birds. Easy to grow, *Echinacea purpurea* prefers full to partial sun and medium soil conditions, but will tolerate clay or dryer conditions. It is somewhat drought resistant, but the entire plant may wilt if the soil becomes too dry in strong sunlight.

Photo courtesy of [Prairie Nursery](#)

Native Americans have recognized the medicinal value of *Echinacea* for centuries. Today, the plants are widely used in supplements and herbal teas for their numerous health benefits.



Shrubby St. John's Wort - *Hypericum prolificum*

Height: 3-4 feet

Flower Color: yellow

Bloom Period: summer

Light Requirements: full to partial

Soil Moisture: medium-moist

Shrubby St. John's Wort is a medium sized shrub, up to 4 feet high and wide. A profusion of cheerful yellow flowers cover this shrub throughout the summer, attracting legions of pollinators. The seed capsules persist throughout the winter and offer food for winter birds, along with late season visual interest.

The growth rate of Shrubby St. John's Wort is slow but this beautiful shrub is well worth it! Highly adaptable and hardy, it does best in full sun in almost any soil, including heavy clay. Drought tolerant, rabbit and deer resistant. It's a real winner!

It is also an important larval host plant for several species of butterflies and moths, including the Gray Hairstreak butterfly and the Wavy-lined Emerald moth.

Photo courtesy of [Prairie Nursery](#)



Maidenhair Fern - *Adiantum pedatum* - 1 quart size

Height: 1-2 feet

Flower Color: green

Bloom Period: summer

Light Requirements: shade

Soil Moisture: medium-moist

Gently arching fronds seem to float suspended above the ground in a graceful fan-like shape that is unique among ferns. The floating illusion is maintained by a structure of very fine black stems that all but disappear against the background. Highly recommended for home landscaping Maidenhair fern is easy to grow, low maintenance, and highly resistant to damage from deer.

Native to the rich wooded slopes and damp shady woodlands East of the Mississippi, *Adiantum pedatum* thrives in well-drained to slightly damp soil in full shade. Plants will tolerate mild drought as long as they are not exposed to direct sun – in which case morning sun is better than the hot afternoon sun.

Photo courtesy of [Prairie Nursery](#)



Wild Bergamot – *Monarda fistulosa*

Height: 2-5 feet

Flower Color: lavender

Bloom Period: summer

Light Requirements: full sun

Soil Moisture: dry, medium, moist

Benefit: deer resistant

Bergamot (or bee balm) is a well-known and highly adaptable native plant that thrives in all but the wettest soils. The fragrant lavender flowers are a popular nectar source for pollinators and attract a wide variety of bees and butterflies. Hummingbirds may also visit.

A member of the mint family, Bergamot has long been used by indigenous people for a variety of medicinal applications. The distinctly aromatic leaves are commonly used to make tea, and the button seed heads are popular in dried floral arrangements.

Bergamot is a host plant for the Hermit Sphinx moth (*Sphinx emeritus*).

Photo courtesy of [Prairie Nursery](#)



Bottle Gentian – *Gentiana andrewsii*

Height: 1-2 feet

Color: violet/blue

Bloom Period: summer to fall

Light Requirements: full to partial sun

Soil Moisture: medium to wet

Bottle Gentian has bottle-like deep blue flowers that never actually open. The unusual blooms are pollinated exclusively by bumblebees, which have the size and strength needed to pry open the flowers and gain entry. It is quite entertaining to watch!

Bottle Gentians are slow-growing but long-lived and require little care once established. Bottle gentian tolerates cold weather and even frost, blooming late into the fall.

Bottle gentian is bitter tasting to mammals and other herbivores, so this plant is usually not utilized as a food source. White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) are one of the few animals that may chomp off the tender tops of the plants before they have a chance to flower. In response to herbivory, the plant may produce side branches with flowers on them. The seeds are too small to be used by birds as a food source.

Photo courtesy of [Prairie Nursery](#)