

# Native Grasses and Forbs

## What Are Native Plants?

Native plants are those that developed naturally in North America. More specifically, native plants in a particular area are those that were growing naturally in the area before humans introduced plants from distant places. In central North America, native plants typically grew in communities with other plants that adapted to similar soil, moisture and weather conditions.

## Why Landscape with Native Plants?

### ✓ Native Plants Save Energy

Native plants have developed and adapted to local conditions over thousands of years. They are vigorous and hardy, so they can survive summer heat and winter cold. Once established, they require no irrigation or fertilization and minimal pesticides. They are resistant to most pests and diseases. Thus, native plants suit today's interest in "low-maintenance" gardening and landscaping.

### ✓ Native Plants Save Money

In most cases, planting a native plant community costs less than installing a turf landscape. In the longer term, it costs much less to maintain. Though it can be a few years before a native plant community is well established, once mature it can last for generations with minimal maintenance.

### ✓ Native Plants Stay Put

Each native plant species is a member of a community that includes other plants, animals and microorganisms. The natural balance keeps each species in check, allowing it to thrive in conditions where it is suited, but preventing it from overpopulating. Thus, native species rarely become invasive, as plants introduced from other areas can be.

### ✓ Native Plants Are Interesting

The diversity of native plants includes interesting stems, leaves, flowers and fruit. Native grasses, shrubs and trees provide a variety of heights, shapes and textures in the landscape. Many provide winter interest through their bark or seed pods.

### ✓ Native Plants Are Beautiful

A native plant community is an ever changing environment of color, light, texture, sound and motion. It provides food and cover for a wide variety of wildlife. It is beautiful to look at and walk through.

### ✓ Environmental Benefits

Native plant communities make the best possible use of natural resources. Native plants provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and other desirable wildlife. Many help to enrich the soil. Their root systems help rainfall penetrate into the soil, reducing erosion and runoff. This improves water quality. In human dominated environments, native plant communities do require some maintenance, but far less than the polluting power equipment and chemicals needed for traditional turf landscapes.

For more info, contact Air Quality at 913-573-6700  
or visit [www.wycokck.org/airquality](http://www.wycokck.org/airquality)