

Recommended Native Plants for Your Garden

Not all plants work well in every Alaskan eco-region and garden setting. Research each plant to learn garden requirements, methods of cultivation or wild stand management, soil and water requirements, pollinators and more.

Autumn Color: Bearberry, Birch, Fireweed, Highbush cranberry, Mountain ash, Red currant, Shrub birch, Tamarack, Wild blueberry, Wild roses.

Bird Habitat (cover, nesting sites, food): All Alaska wild berries, Asters, Birch, Dragonhead mint, Goldenrods, Hemlock, Junipers, Redosier dogwood, Sedges & rushes (many kinds) Silverberry, Soapberry, Spruce (white, black, Sitka), Tamarack, Wild grasses, Willows.

Butterfly Gardens (host plants for butterfly larvae & nectar plants): Alder, All wild berries, Kinnikinnick, Lupine (Arctic, nootka), Shrubby cinquefoil, Violets, Wild parsley, Wild (Eskimo) potato, Wild sweet pea, Willows, Yarrow.

Cutting Gardens: Goldenrods, Grass of Parnassus, Great burnet, Larkspur, Northern bedstraw, Silverberry, Tall Jacob's ladder, Violets, Wild chives, Wild iris, Yarrow.

Dye Gardens: Arnicas, Asters, Goldenrods, Larkspur, Lowbush cranberry (lingonberry), Mountain ash, Northern bedstraw, Red-berried elder, Serviceberry, Strawberry spinach, Violets, Wild iris.

Early Season Color: Alder, Beautiful Jacob's ladder, Bluebells, Blueberries, Coltsfoot, Crowberry, Currants, Kinnikinnick, Labrador tea, Leatherleaf, Lowbush cranberry (Lingonberry), Marsh marigold, Nagoon berry, Narcissus-flowered Anemone, Pasque flower, Rock cress, Saxifrages (purple mountain, prickly), Serviceberry, Violets, Whitlow grass, Wild roses, Willows.

Edible and Traditional Food Gardens: All edible wild berries, Burnet (Sitka, Great, Menzies), Chocolate lily, Coltsfoot, Dock (sour, curly), Fiddlehead ferns, Fireweed, Goldenrod, Labrador tea, Roseroot, Saxifrages (brook, purple mountain), Shooting stars, Soapberry, Spring Beauty, Stinging nettle, Wild chives, Wild rhubarb, Wild mustards, Wild (Eskimo) potato.

Fragrance: Beautiful Jacob's Ladder, Bluebell, Coltsfoot, Northern bedstraw, Red-berried elder, Silverberry, Violets, Wild sweet pea, Wild roses.

Ground Covers: Dwarf dogwood, False lily-of-the-valley, Kinnikinnick, Lowbush cranberry (lingonberry), Nagoonberry, Pearly everlasting, Pussy toes, Twinflower, Wild strawberry, Trailing raspberry.

Lawn replacement (low growth, occasional mowing, foot traffic): Bluegrass (alpine, glaucous), Dwarf dogwood, Fleabane, Kinnikinnick, Nagoonberry, Pearly everlasting, Pussytoes, Siberian aster, Silverweed, Violets, Wild chamomile, Wild strawberry, Yellow oxytrope, Yarrow.

Meadow Gardens (dry, xeric): Arnicas, Asters (leafy, Siberian), Fireweed, Jacob's ladder, Fringed fleabane, Goldenrods (elegant, decumbent, northern), Lupines (Arctic, nootka), Arctic chamomile, Wild geranium, Wild (Eskimo) potato, Yarrow, Yellow oxytrope.

Meadow Gardens (moist): Alaska spiraea, Bluebells, Chocolate lily, Columbine (blue, western), Common harebell, Jacobs ladder, Larkspur, Lupines (Arctic, nootka), Shooting stars, Shrubby cinquefoil, Watermelon berry, Wild iris, Yarrow.

Perennial Gardens: Beautiful Jacob's ladder, Blue flax, Few-flowered meadow rue, Frigid arnica, Fringed fleabane, Forget-me-not, Monkey flower, Narcissus-flowered anemone, Pasque flower, Shooting stars, Star gentian, Violets, Columbine (blue, western), Wild chives, Wild geranium, Wild iris, Yarrow.

Pollinator Gardens: Alaska poppy, All wild berries, Alaska spiraea, Angelica, Arnicas, Artemisia, Avens, Asters, Bluebells, Columbine (western, blue), Corydalis, Fireweed, Labrador tea, Locoweeds, Lupines, Milkvetch, Oxytropes, Pasque flower, Potentilla, Red-berried Elder, Shooting stars, Violets, Wild chives, Wild chamomile, Wild iris, Wild roses, Wild sweet pea, Wild (Eskimo) potato, Willows, Yarrow.

Roadsides, Land Restoration: Arnicas, Common wormwood (Artemisia), Fireweed, Jacob's ladder (tall, beautiful) Northern bedstraw, Redosier dogwood, Silverberry, Shrubby cinquefoil, Wild grasses and sedges, Willows, Yarrow.

Rock Gardens, Low Borders: Aleutian speedwell, Blue-eyed grass, Dwarf willows (arctic, skeleton-leaf, net-leaf), Denseleaf draba, Frigid arnica, Bog rosemary, Moss campion, Mountain avens, One-flowered cinquefoil, Pasque flower, Poppies (Alaska, pale), Pussytoes, Saxifrages (Yellow-spotted, Prickly, brook), Yellow dryas.

Shade & Woodland (filtered sunlight) Gardens: Bluebell, Common Harebell, Dwarf dogwood, False lily-of-the-valley, Ferns (Fragile, Ostrich, lady), Fringe cup, Goatsbeard, Kinnikinnick, Labrador tea, Lowbush cranberry (lingonberry), Pink pyrola, Redosier dogwood, Spotted Ladyslipper Orchid, Twinflower, Violets, Watermelon berry, Whitlow grass.

Trees and Shrubs (specimens, hedges, foundations): Alaska spiraea, Alder (thinleaf, red, mountain), Birch, Copperbush, Devil's club (with caution), False azalea, Goatsbeard, Highbush cranberry, Mountain ash, Redosier dogwood, Red-berried elder, Serviceberry, Silverberry, Shrubby cinquefoil, Soapberry, Spruce (white, Sitka) Willows.

Wetlands, Water Gardens, Ponds, Streams: Buckbean, Cattail, Coltsfoot, Cotton grass, Dwarf waterlily, Marsh marigold, Tufted loosestrife, Sedges, Wild calla.

Winter Interest (shapes, textures, colors, and seed pods): Alder (thinleaf, Sitka, red), Birch, Clump-forming grasses, Devil's club, Hemlock, Labrador tea, Larkspur, Mountain ash (Greene's, Sitka), Redosier dogwood, Serviceberry, Spruce (white, black, Sitka), Wild iris, Yarrow.

Alaska Native Plants in your Garden



Wild iris, *Iris setosa*

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Why Grow Native Plants?

Native plants are hardy and locally adapted to Alaska's weather extremes and diverse habitats, especially our cold soils which are often acidic and have low nutrient levels.

They can be used to restore land and water resources, manage erosion, and maintain healthy soils.

Many provide great early-season color in flower gardens, and adapt well to home and commercial landscapes.

They support a diversity of insect pollinators and provide food, homes and habitats for wild birds, animals, insects, and soil microorganisms.

They provide wild greens, root vegetables, herbs, flowers, sap, and berries for food.

They are used as medicinal teas, salves, tinctures, poultices, steam baths, and much more.

They contribute to unique artwork including pressed flowers, wood carving, dyes and basketry.

Woody native plants are used to build homes, food caches, saunas, boats and furniture, and they provide fuel for homes.

They provide a sense of place when added to formal gardens and can help connect them to surrounding natural landscapes.

Native plants are an integral part of traditional food ways and cultural practices of Alaska Native peoples.

Tips for Getting Started

Learn as much as you can about native plants especially cultivation requirements, propagation, soils, and hardiness. Challenge yourself to learn how to propagate native plants from seeds and cuttings. Many native plants growing in the wild have extensive root systems, grow in difficult terrain, or do not transplant well. Avoid digging native plants from the wild unless they are on construction sites destined for destruction, or you have permission.

Seeds may be collected for personal use on public lands in areas managed by national forests, Bureau of Land Management, wildlife refuges, state agencies, municipalities and Department of Transportation rights-



Alaska Birch, *Betula neoalaskana*

of-way. Know land ownership before you collect, and contact the agency to learn about collection locations, quantity limitations, threatened and endangered species, and more.

Choose garden sites that are close to native plant habitats in soil texture, pH and organic matter content. Consider sunlight, moisture and drainage requirements. Only grow plants where the site matches their natural environment, or prepare to change garden conditions with soil additives, rocks, mulches, irrigation, water features, and more.

Native plant gardens can take just as much care and maintenance as any perennial garden in terms of pruning, irrigation, plant nutrients, propagation, and renovation. Like any ornamental, each native plant has its own set of growing conditions. Attention to details will enrich your garden in many ways.

Sources of Seeds, Plants

Explore local nurseries, seed companies, native plant societies, garden clubs, public gardens, and local gardeners to purchase native seeds and plants.

Many public programs have spring and summer plant sales as well as seed sales and exchanges. (Our list is not inclusive. No endorsement is implied).

Alaska Botanical Garden: Anchorage (plants) <https://www.alaskabg.org>

Alaska Native Plant Seed Library: Anchorage (seeds) <https://www.facebook.com/alaskanativeplantseeds>

Alaska Native Plant Society: (seeds) <http://aknps.org>; seeds@aknps.org

Alaska Rock Garden Society: Anchorage, Wasilla (plants) <https://akrockgardensociety.org>

Alpine Garden Nursery: Palmer (plants) 455 Hyer Rd, Palmer, Ak 99645. (907)355-2465. (by appointment only)



Cloudberry, *Rubus chamaemorus*

Bear Mountain Forest Nursery: Peters Creek (berries) akplantguy91@gmail.com

Landscape Alaska: Juneau (plants) <https://landscapealaska.com>

St. Isidore Farm (seeds, plants) North Pole, AK <https://www.stisidorefarmak.com>

Seeds and Soil Farm, Palmer, Alaska (seeds) <https://seedsandsoilorganics.com>

Recommended Reading

Alaska Native Plant Society: Available online: <https://aknps.org/additional-resources>

Alaska Plant Materials Center: Available online: <https://plants.alaska.gov/Horticulture.html>

Edible Alaska Magazine. Available online: <https://ediblealaska.ediblecommunities.com>

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Holloway, P. and V. Gauss. 2021. Wildflowers for Northern Gardens. A. F. Farmer, LLC, Fairbanks, AK.

Hulten, E. Flora of Alaska & Neighboring Territories. Stanford Univ. Press, CA. Available online: <https://alaskaflora.org/hulten>

Lewis, S. Using Alaska's wild berries and other wild edibles. University of Alaska Fairbanks. Cooperative Extension Service. FNH-00t20.

Pratt, V.E. 1995. Alaska's Wild Berries and Berry-like Fruit. Alaskakrafts, Anchorage, AK.

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Pratt, V.E. and F.G. Pratt. 1993. Wildflowers of Denali National Park. Alaskakrafts, Anchorage AK.

Schofield, J.J. 2020. Alaska's Wild Plants. A Guide to Alaska's Edible and Healthful Harvest. Alaska Northwest Books. Portland, OR.

Viereck, L.A. & E.L. Little, Jr. 2007. Alaska Trees and Shrubs. UA Press, Fairbanks, AK.

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