



It is important to plant a variety of native plants, blooming from springtime to fall to provide food and habitat to pollinators and wildlife throughout the entire season. Below are native plants suitable to Northwestern Ontario, organized by bloom time, light requirements, and moisture requirements to help you plan a garden well-suited to your backyard.

WHY CHOOSE NATIVE PLANTS?

-  Create habitat for butterflies, insects, birds and mammals
-  Native plants compete with and crowd out invasive species
-  They are low-maintenance, hardier and more adaptable as they have lived in this climate for hundreds of years
-  Most species are perennials or biennials, meaning less work for you each spring



WILDFLOWERS

SPECIES NAME	SUNLIGHT REQUIREMENTS			MOISTURE REQUIREMENTS				BLOOM TIME	FULL GROWN HEIGHT	NOTES
	Full Sun	Partial Shade	Shade	Wet	Moist	Inter-mediate	Dry			
American cornmint (<i>Mentha canadensis</i>)		✓	✓	✓	✓			Summer	10- 30 cm	Attracts a wide variety of native bees.
Anise hyssop (<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>)	✓	✓				✓	✓	Summer	30 - 90 cm	Attracts bees, birds, and butterflies.
Black-eyed susan (<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		Summer	30 - 90 cm	An easy-to-grow self-seeding biennial.
Blue flag iris (<i>Iris versicolour</i>)	✓			✓	✓			Spring	30 - 80 cm	Nectar for hummingbirds and deer resistant.

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Blue vervain (<i>Verbena hastata</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		Summer	10 - 30 cm	Deer resistant, fast growing, long blooming.
Blue-eyed grass (<i>Sisyrinchium montanum</i>)	✓				✓	✓		Spring	10 - 30 cm	A member of the Iris family; birds love the seeds!
Common boneset (<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>)		✓	✓		✓	✓		Summer	120 - 180 cm	A good addition to pollinator and rain gardens.
Common yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)	✓					✓	✓	Summer	30 - 90 cm	Popular with pollinators and care-free.
Evening primrose (<i>Oenothera parviflora</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	Summer	30 - 90 cm	Lemon scented, yellow flowers. Attracts moths.
False solomon's seal (<i>Maianthemum racemosum</i>)		✓	✓		✓	✓		Spring	50 - 90 cm	Birds and insects love the berries.
Fireweed (<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>)	✓					✓	✓	Late Summer	1 - 1.5 m	Bumblebees love it. Spreads readily.
Bog goldenrod (<i>Solidago uliginosa</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓		Fall	60 - 150 cm	Water-loving, late summer bloomer.
Canada goldenrod (<i>Solidago canadensis</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	Fall	60 - 150 cm	An important source of late season nectar for bees.
Early goldenrod (<i>Solidago juncea</i>)		✓	✓			✓	✓	Summer	50 - 120 cm	An early blooming goldenrod that attracts butterflies.
Field goldenrod (<i>Solidago nemoralis</i>)	✓						✓	Fall	30 - 60 cm	Does well in dry, even poor, rocky soil.
Hairy goldenrod (<i>Solidago hispida</i>)	✓	✓				✓	✓	Fall	50 - 90 cm	Prefers sandy or rocky soils.
White flat-topped goldenrod (<i>Solidago ptarmicoides</i>)	✓	✓				✓	✓	Late Summer	30 - 50 cm	Attracts butterflies and provides late season nectar.
Harebell (<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	Summer	20 - 50 cm	Delicate and abundant flowers loved by bees.
Spotted Joe-Pye weed (<i>Eutrochium maculatum</i>)	✓				✓	✓		Late Summer	1 - 2 m	Large bloom and easy to grow. Deer resistant.
Kalm's lobelia (<i>Lobelia kalmii</i>)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			Summer	0.5 - 1 m	Easy to grow, moisture-loving plant.
Nodding beggartick (<i>Bidens cernua</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	Summer	30 - 60 cm	Daisy-like flower; foliage is an attractive ground-cover.
Large-leaved aster (<i>Eurybia macrophylla</i>)		✓	✓			✓	✓	Fall	30 cm	Large, heart-shaped leaves provide ground cover.
Marsh marigold (<i>Caltha palustris</i>)		✓		✓	✓			Spring	20 - 60 cm	Attracts butterflies and humming-birds.
Common milkweed (<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>)	✓				✓	✓		Summer	90 - 120 cm	Monarchs lay their eggs exclusively on milkweed.
Swamp milkweed (<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>)	✓			✓	✓			Summer	90 - 120 cm	Monarch lay their eggs exclusively on milkweed.
New England aster (<i>Symphotrichum novae-angliae</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓		Fall	75 - 120 cm	Important fall food source for pollinators.
Northern bedstraw (<i>Galium boreale</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓		Spring	30 - 90 cm	Forms dense patches and is a good ground cover.
Northern bog violet (<i>Viola nephrophylla</i>)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Spring	10 - 20 cm	Re-seeds easy and is a great ground cover for shady spots.

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	Full Sun	Partial Shade	Shade	Wet	Moist	Intermediate	Dry			
Red columbine (<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>)		✓			✓	✓		Spring	30 - 80 cm	Loved by hummingbirds.
Smooth blue aster (<i>Symphotrichum laeve</i>)		✓				✓	✓	Fall	60 - 90 cm	Brilliant blue-violet flowers for a pop of colour late summer.
Spotted jewelweed (<i>Impatiens capensis</i>)		✓	✓		✓	✓		Summer	0.5 - 1.5 m	Easy-to-grow groundcover. Attracts bumblebees, butterflies and hummingbirds.
Stiff sunflower (<i>Helianthus pauciflorus</i>)	✓					✓	✓	Summer	60 - 180 cm	A sunflower native to Northwestern Ontario.
Sweet-scented bedstraw (<i>Galium trifolium</i>)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Spring	15 cm	A perfect trailing ground cover and good caterpillar food source.
Tall meadow rue (<i>Thalictrum dasycarpum</i>)		✓	✓		✓	✓		Early Summer	1 - 1.5 m	Bees and beetles love this plant.
Tall thimbleweed (<i>Anemone virginiana</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓		Late Spring	60 - 90 cm	Prefers soils with plenty of organic matter.
White turtlehead (<i>Chelone glabra</i>)		✓			✓			Summer	60 - 120 cm	Pair with other moisture loving species like Swamp Milkweed.
Wild ginger (<i>Asarum canadense</i>)			✓		✓			Spring	10 - 20 cm	Offers a dense ground cover when allowed to spread.
Wild strawberry (<i>Fragaria virginiana</i>)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	Late Spring	10 - 20 cm	Great groundcover for sunny gardens. Spreads readily.
Wood lily (<i>Lilium philadelphicum</i>)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	Summer	30 - 90 cm	Beautiful, fragrant flowers, loved by hummingbirds.

GRASSES

SPECIES NAME	SUNLIGHT REQUIREMENTS			MOISTURE REQUIREMENTS				BLOOM TIME	FULL GROWN HEIGHT	NOTES
	Full Sun	Partial Shade	Shade	Wet	Moist	Intermediate	Dry			
Bebb's sedge (<i>Carex bebbii</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		Summer	90 cm	A durable perennial in wet conditions. Plant in fall.
Big bur-reed (<i>Sparganium eurycarpum</i>)		✓		✓	✓			Summer	60 - 180 cm	An emergent aquatic species.
Bottlebrush sedge (<i>Carex hystericina</i>)		✓		✓	✓			Summer	60 - 100 cm	Thrives in wet conditions; pond, pool, and river edges.
Canadian bluejoint (<i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓			Summer	Up to 2 m	Valuable forage for birds and wildlife. Excellent option for strengthening stream banks.
Fox sedge (<i>Carex vulpinoidea</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		Summer	90 cm	Excellent for growing around ponds, streams or marshy areas. Spreads quickly.
Foxtail barley (<i>Hordeum jubatum</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	Summer	50 cm	Salt tolerant but does not compete well with taller vegetation.
Hairy woodrush (<i>Luzula acuminata</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓		Late Spring	20 - 40 cm	Often used as groundcover of pathway edging.
Heath woodrush (<i>Luzula multiflora</i>)		✓			✓			Late Spring	20 - 40 cm	Provides food and shelter for insects.

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	Full Sun	Partial Shade	Shade	Wet	Moist	Inter-mediate	Dry			
Lake sedge (<i>Carex lacustris</i>)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			Late Spring	50 - 100 cm	A host plant for many Lepidopteran species (butterflies)
Northern sweetgrass (<i>Anthoxanthum hirtum</i>)		✓			✓	✓		Summer	20 - 60 cm	Provides habitat for small wildlife and insects.
Path rush (<i>Juncus tenuis</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	Spring	30 cm	Can tolerate moderate foot traffic and is very adaptable.
Small-flower woodrush (<i>Luzula parviflora</i>)		✓	✓		✓			Summer	30 - 90 cm	Drooping, branched flower clusters attractive to birds.
Switch grass (<i>Panicum virgatum</i>)	✓					✓	✓	Summer	120 cm	A low maintenance grass and good source of food for birds.

FERNS

SPECIES NAME	SUNLIGHT REQUIREMENTS			MOISTURE REQUIREMENTS				BLOOM TIME	FULL GROWN HEIGHT	NOTES
	Full Sun	Partial Shade	Shade	Wet	Moist	Inter-mediate	Dry			
Fragrant wood fern (<i>Dryopteris fragrans</i>)	✓	✓				✓		Spring	10 - 30 cm	Often found on limestone, cliffs, and talus slopes.
Intermediate wood fern (<i>Dryopteris intermedia</i>)		✓	✓		✓			Summer	40 - 100 cm	Native to rocky woods, ravines, and edges of swamps.
Lady fern (<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>)		✓	✓		✓			Spring	30 - 90 cm	Amend soil with organic material for best growth.
Ostrich fern (<i>Matteuccia struthiopteris</i>)			✓		✓			Spring	1 - 2 m	Ideal solution for filling damp, shady spots in your garden.
Sensitive fern (<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>)		✓	✓		✓			Spring	30 - 90 cm	Provides shelter and shade within your garden.

LOW-GROWING SHRUBS

SPECIES NAME	SUNLIGHT REQUIREMENTS			MOISTURE REQUIREMENTS				BLOOM TIME	FULL GROWN HEIGHT	NOTES
	Full Sun	Partial Shade	Shade	Wet	Moist	Inter-mediate	Dry			
Bearberry (<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	Spring	15 - 20 cm	An excellent evergreen for ground cover. Very hardy and drought tolerant.
Common juniper (<i>Juniperus communis</i>)	✓						✓	Spring	60 - 150 cm	Small shrubs with erect, needled branches.
Creeping juniper (<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i>)	✓	✓					✓	Spring	15 - 25 cm	Spreading ground cover, sending out low-lying branches.
Ninebark (<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	Summer	Up to 2.5 m	Drought tolerant with white flowers. Bright fall foliage.
Northern bush honeysuckle (<i>Diervilla lonicera</i>)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	Summer	30 - 100 cm	Yellow/red/orange flowers. Spreads.
Northern redcurrant (<i>Ribes triste</i>)	✓	✓			✓			Summer	1 - 1.5 m	Red berries are enjoyed by many animals.
Prickly wild rose (<i>Rosa palustris</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓			Summer	1 m	Low growing bush with fragrant pink blooms. Tolerant to seasonal flooding.

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	Full Sun	Partial Shade	Shade	Wet	Moist	Intermediate	Dry			
Red baneberry (<i>Actaea rubra</i>)		✓	✓		✓	✓		Summer	20 - 50 cm	Provides shade and habitat to the understory.
Smooth rose (<i>Rosa blanda</i>)	✓	✓				✓	✓	Summer	1 - 2 m	Rose hips provide important winter forage for birds.
Snowberry (<i>Symphoricarpos alba</i>)		✓				✓	✓	Late Spring	1 m	Prefer sandy and rocky soils. Great groundcover.
Spreading dogbane (<i>Apocynum androsaemifolium</i>)	✓				✓	✓		Summer	30 - 90 cm	Attracts butterflies. May spread.
Sweet gale (<i>Myrica gale</i>)	✓			✓	✓	✓		Summer	0.5 - 1.5 m	Low growing. Leaves have pleasant odor when crushed.
Thimbleberry (<i>Rubus parviflorus</i>)		✓			✓			Spring	1 - 2 m	A good choice for a rain garden.
Virgin's bower (<i>Clematis virginiana</i>)			✓		✓	✓		Summer	Up to 6 m	Easy to care for and will vine up trees in harmony.
Virginia creeper (<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>)		✓			✓	✓		Summer	5 - 15 m	May spread aggressively.
White meadowsweet (<i>Spiraea alba</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓			Summer	60 - 180 cm	A deciduous shrub with white flowers blooming in July.
Wild raspberry (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓			Summer	1.5 m	Flowers and berries for pollinators, wildlife, and you!
Wild sarsaparilla (<i>Aralia nudicaulis</i>)			✓		✓			Spring	60 cm	A flowering plant with green-red leaves and spring blooms.

TALL SHRUBS & SMALL TREES

SPECIES NAME	SUNLIGHT REQUIREMENTS			MOISTURE REQUIREMENTS				BLOOM TIME	FULL GROWN HEIGHT	NOTES
	Full Sun	Partial Shade	Shade	Wet	Moist	Intermediate	Dry			
Beaked hazelnut (<i>Corylus cornuta</i>)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		Summer	1 - 2.5 m	Edible nuts provide food for wildlife.
Bebb willow (<i>Salix bebbiana</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓			Spring	2 - 6 m	Attracts pollinators and is an important early-season food source.
Chokecherry (<i>Prunus virginiana</i>)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		Spring	4 - 9 m	Red berries an important food source for migratory birds.
Common elderberry (<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓			Early Summer	1.5 - 4.5 m	Lightly scented flowers and important berry food source for birds.
Heart-leaved willow (<i>Salix eriocephala</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓			Spring	2 - 5 m	Found naturally in wetlands, this willow thrives in sun or part shade and clay soils.
Highbush cranberry (<i>Viburnum trilobum</i>)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Summer	2 - 4 m	White flowers and attractive red berries are an important food source for birds.
Meadow willow (<i>Salix petiolaris</i>)	✓			✓	✓			Spring	2 - 6 m	Found most commonly in open marsh habitat.
Pussy willow (<i>Salix discolor</i>)	✓			✓	✓			Spring	2 - 6 m	An all-around willow and important source of pollen.
Red-berried elder (<i>Sambucus racemosa</i>)		✓	✓		✓	✓		Spring	1 - 6 m	Provide berries and shelter for wildlife; adaptable to different soil types.

SPECIES NAME	SUNLIGHT REQUIREMENTS			MOISTURE REQUIREMENTS				BLOOM TIME	FULL GROWN HEIGHT	NOTES
	Full Sun	Partial Shade	Shade	Wet	Moist	Inter-mediate	Dry			
Red osier dogwood (<i>Cornus sericea</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		Summer	1.5 - 3 m	Spreads by underground stems which helps to stabilize wet slopes. Attracts pollinators.
Round-leaved dogwood (<i>Cornus rugosa</i>)		✓	✓			✓	✓	Summer	1.5 - 3 m	Prefers thin canopies with dappled sunlight and garden edges. This is a host species for two butterflies.
Saskatoon serviceberry (<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	Summer	4 - 9 m	Attractive white flowers and edible berries.
Showy mountain ash (<i>Sorbus decora</i>)	✓					✓		Summer	4 - 9 m	Fragrant, attracting pollinators and providing berries to birds.
Smooth serviceberry (<i>Amelanchier laevis</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓		Summer	4 - 7 m	Provide shelter to understory and berries attract birds.
Speckled alder (<i>Alnus incarna</i>)	✓			✓	✓			Summer	3 - 6 m	Great shoreline stabilizer. Low maintenance.

LARGE TREES

SPECIES NAME	SUNLIGHT REQUIREMENTS			MOISTURE REQUIREMENTS				BLOOM TIME	FULL GROWN HEIGHT	NOTES
	Full Sun	Partial Shade	Shade	Wet	Moist	Inter-mediate	Dry			
Balsam fir (<i>Abies balsamea</i>)	✓	✓				✓		Summer	15 - 30 m	Food source over winter. Can offer windbreak and shelter.
Black ash (<i>Fraxinus nigra</i>)		✓		✓	✓			Summer	15 - 20 m	Susceptible to disease; source locally. Dry fruit important food source.
Black spruce (<i>Picea mariana</i>)		✓		✓	✓			Summer	15 - 30 m	Versatile tree offering shelter and food to wildlife.
Eastern white cedar (<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		Summer	15 - 30 m	Offers low lying, sweet-scented branches for habitat.
Green ash (<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>)	✓				✓			Summer	10 - 20 m	Offers shade. Susceptible to pests and disease. Seeds are valuable to waterfowl.
Northern red oak (<i>Quercus rubra</i>)		✓			✓	✓		Summer	15 - 25 m	Medium sized tree with acorns attracting small wildlife.
Red maple (<i>Acer rubrum</i>)	✓	✓		✓	✓			Summer	15 - 25 m	Thick, strong roots. Be sure to plant well away from infrastructure.
Red pine (<i>Pinus resinosa</i>)	✓					✓		Summer	15 - 35 m	Very tolerant to cold and poor soil.
Sugar maple (<i>Acer saccharum</i>)		✓	✓			✓	✓	Summer	20 - 35 m	Roots are deep and spreading. Brilliant fall foliage.
Tamarack (<i>Larix laricina</i>)	✓				✓			Spring	15 - 25 m	Plant in open areas as they do not tolerate shade. Fast growing and low maintenance.
Trembling aspen (<i>Populus tremuloides</i>)	✓	✓			✓	✓		Summer	20 - 25 m	Grow quickly and are hardy. Can spread easily.
White birch (<i>Betula papyrifera</i>)	✓				✓	✓		Summer	15 - 25 m	Easy to grow and deer resistant. Beautiful fall foliage.
White pine (<i>Pinus strobus</i>)	✓	✓				✓	✓	Summer	20 - 40 m	Prefer rich, moist, well-drained soil that is slightly acidic.

SPECIES NAME	SUNLIGHT REQUIREMENTS			MOISTURE REQUIREMENTS				BLOOM TIME	FULL GROWN HEIGHT	NOTES
	Full Sun	Partial Shade	Shade	Wet	Moist	Inter-mediate	Dry			
White spruce (<i>Picea glauca</i>)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	Summer	20 - 30 m	Adaptable evergreens, easy to grow and very forgiving.
Yellow birch (<i>Betula alleghaniensis</i>)	✓	✓			✓			Summer	20 - 35 m	Prefers rich and well-drained soil.

PLANTING TIPS

This list is not exhaustive but offers a lot of different native plants to play with in your backyard. When sourcing native plants, it is important to consider where they are coming from. Plants can be a serious concern in one area of the province, and present very little risk in another area. Supporting local nurseries and identifying plants by their scientific (Latin) names will help ensure you are using plants that won't pose a threat to the surrounding environment.

Native plants are well adapted to local climate and soil conditions, are more resistant to local diseases and pests, and require less effort, time, and money to maintain. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- Survey your backyard and make note of what's already growing there. Check in with [LRCA's Invasive Species Guide](#) and pull any invasive species.
- From the plants already growing in your backyard, or by taking a close look at your garden, make note of the types of soil, water, and light conditions present. Select new plants for your garden based on these observations.
- Call before you dig. Check with Ontario One Call before you dig (www.on1call.com or 1-800-400-2255). If your project involves the importation or removal of fill and/or site grading and/or the building of any structure, a [permit under Ontario Regulation 180/06 from the LRCA may be required](#).
- Start small and grow. A fully, self-sustaining native plant garden will take time to establish. Consider starting with a small area and slowly expanding each year. Consider grouping the same type of plants together, rather than scattering individual plants. Follow all care instructions that come with your new plants to ensure successful establishment their first year of growth.
- Lastly, HAVE FUN! Growing native plants can help you learn more about Thunder Bay's natural landscapes and connect with nature. Enjoy the process and track your new bee, butterfly, and bird visitors using the citizen science platform [iNaturalist](#).

