

## FAQ Native Plants



**What is a native plant and why do they matter?** Native plants are plants that occurred naturally in an area prior to European arrival. Native plants are the foundation of a healthy ecosystem. Wildlife and insects depend on native plants for food, shelter, and nesting resources.

Native plants serve as **host plants** for the native insects, 80% of insects can only eat and reproduce on specific native plants. This is why having host plants is essential for inviting bees, butterflies, and other insects into your garden. Insects are essential to local food webs and crucial for pollinating an estimated 35% of agricultural crops for humans. (Florida Museum of Natural History). Insects play an important role in the survival of birds, reptiles, amphibians, and so on.

Native plants are adapted to grow in our soils and don't require amendments or supplemental fertilizers. They need watering as they establish, but afterwards they do not need additional irrigation. Native plants are an excellent choice for those looking to support biodiversity in their own backyards.

**I'm new to this, where do I start?** Read over this document with FAQs and Landscaping FAQs and then head over to *Quick Start - Choosing Plants*.

**Start Identifying what is growing in your landscape already.** The more informed you are about your landscape the easier it is to know what to remove and what to keep. Selectively keeping wild native plants that you already have on your property can save time and money. Before removing plants, identify them to make sure you're not removing the same native plants that we're trying to reintroduce into landscapes. Knowing what's growing on your property is very valuable knowledge for talking to family, friends, or neighbors about native plants in your landscape.

We recommend the [iNaturalist](#) app, **it's free** and collects data from citizen scientists for researchers to use. Video tutorials of how to use the app can be found online. Once you learn the name of a plant with iNaturalist you can search it online by its Latin name to find out if it is native and what wildlife benefits it may have.

Start in a small area and identify one or two plants at a time. You could also start with identifying the plants that you have the most of. iNat creates a record of these identifications to look back on. You can also use it to identify birds, bugs, or fungi you find too! iNat is a great tool for all ages to get involved in learning about the natural world around them.

**What's the deal with Latin - Do I have to use it?** Our plants have both common and Latin names listed on them. Multiple plants can share common names and these can fluctuate based on who you ask. Latin names are more specific. Even if you're not saying it out loud, looking a plant up by its Latin name can help find more accurate information about that specific plant.

**Can native plants be invasive?** No. They can be "aggressive" and quickly spread, but they still play a role in the local ecosystem and food web. We always identify plants that are active spreaders or re-seeders in their descriptions to help you choose the right plants for your project.

### **Invasive plants are a problem, but everyone can help!**

**Invasive Plants:** Are **non-native** plants that have demonstrated an ability to escape cultivation and outcompete native plants, disrupt local food webs, and invite insects that don't have natural predators in an area. Invasive plants can cause a snowball effect of issues and cause serious harm to our ecosystems.

A 2001 study found that over 33% of the total biomass in Florida consists of invasive plants (Ferriter et. al 2001). Over \$50 million dollars in taxpayer funding is allocated for invasive plant management in Florida every year (IFAS).

### **How you can help protect Florida's biodiversity:**

**Remove invasive plants in your landscape** to stop their spread. Throw them away or put them in biodegradable yard waste bags for ECUA composting pick up if you are in the Pensacola area.

**Don't buy invasive plants** that are still sold in nurseries and box stores. Look for Latin names on plants to know what exactly you're buying.

**Talk to others** as you remove invasive plants on your property. Talk to friends, family, and neighbors who may also have invasive plants on their property. Organize a group effort to remove invasive plants around your neighborhood. Removing just one invasive plant can stop it from spreading seeds for hundreds more!

**Reporting sightings of invasive species in natural areas with the [EDDMapS IveGot1](#)** this app will notify Florida Fish and Wildlife and help efforts for early monitoring and removal.

**Plant native!** Invasive species are able to spread quickly in areas where heavy disturbance, like construction, has occurred. Limiting disturbance and adding native plants back in after disturbances can help add competition and limit opportunities for invasive plants to move in.