

# NATIVE GARDEN PLANTING TIPS



## Planning Tips

- Spring (April-June) or fall (September-October) are ideal for planting natives
- Start planning early - reference our supplier list and order in advance
- Some suppliers offer pre-ordering for a wider selection
- Regional and online native plant nurseries provide additional diversity and harder-to-find native species
- Consider plant size options - plugs are economical but require more care, while larger potted plants establish faster



## Planting Your Garden

- Plant on cloudy days or in evening to minimize transplant stress
- Apply 2-3 inches of natural mulch: for plugs, mulch first then plant through it; for potted plants, apply mulch after planting, keeping it several inches from stems
- Dig holes about twice the width of the root ball and at the same depth as the container
- Water thoroughly after planting to settle soil and remove air pockets



## First-Year Care

- Water 2-3 times per week during first month, once weekly during second month
- After three months, reduce watering to only as needed and during extended dry periods
- Focus on weed control during the first year
- Leave plant stems standing through winter for wildlife habitat
- Cut back dead material in spring before new growth starts



For more information about  
stormwater management  
and other resources,  
visit [iowastormwater.org](http://iowastormwater.org)



# CREATING A NATIVE GARDEN

Plan, Design and Establish



Jester Park • Polk County, Iowa

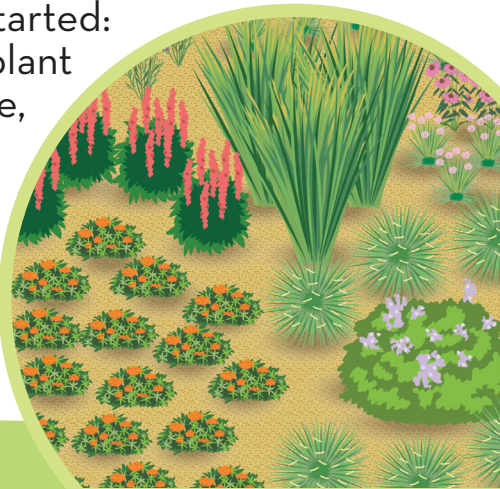


## Plant a sunny or shady native garden in your yard with these ready-to-use designs.

Inside you'll find four versatile layouts—both classic clustered and natural matrix styles. These layouts bring Iowa's prairie heritage right to your doorstep, whether you have a sunny spot or shaded corner.

Native plants support pollinators, manage rainwater naturally, and require less maintenance once established.

This guide provides everything you need to get started: layout diagrams, plant selection guidance, planting tips, and maintenance advice for your first year and beyond.

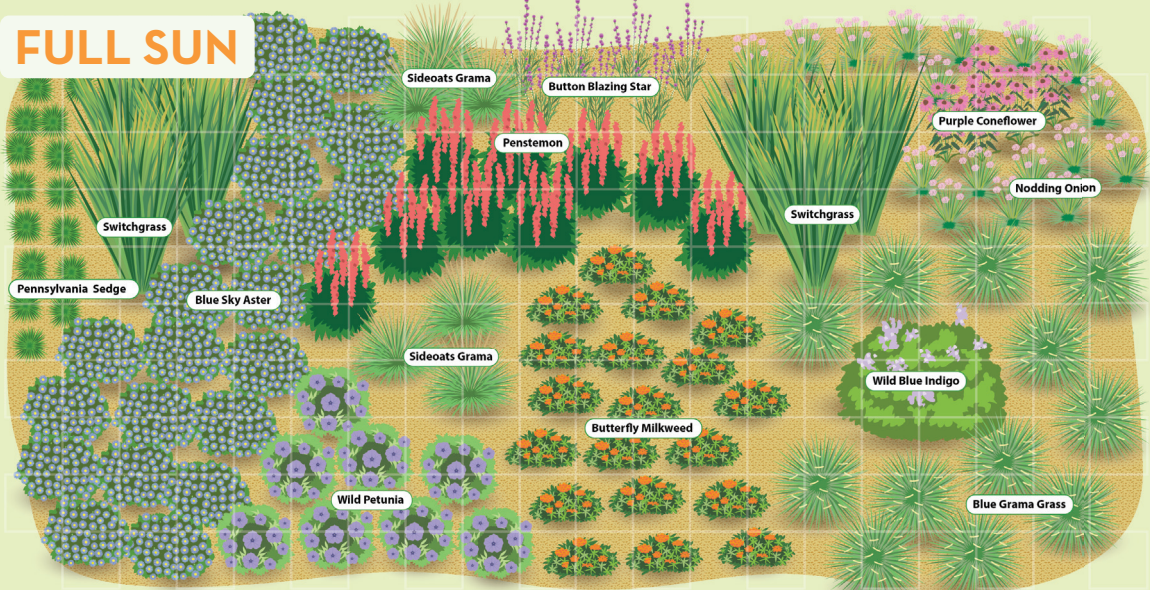





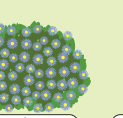


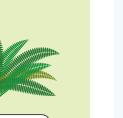
## Classic Clustered Garden Design








This garden design groups plants of the same species together in pleasing clusters. It creates a more formal, designed appearance while still providing habitat benefits. This versatile layout can be viewed from all sides, with shorter plants around the perimeter and taller species toward the center.

**Design Tip:** If placing against a house, fence, or viewing primarily from one direction, arrange plants with taller species in the back and shorter plants in front. Substitutions can easily be made for the species listed.

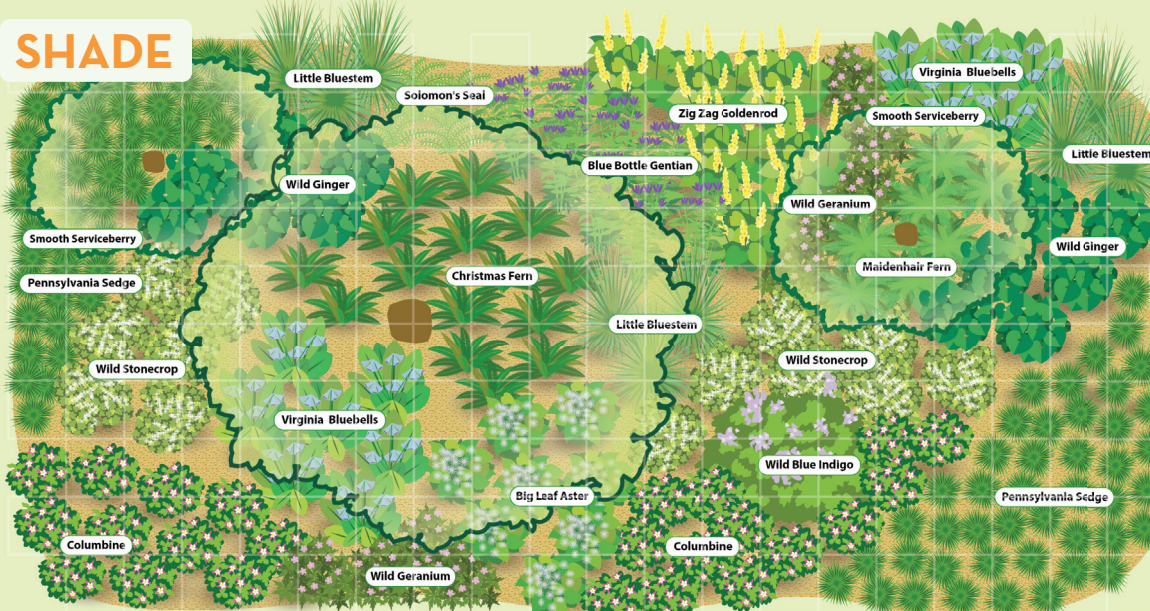


Grid represents 12"x12" Number of plants may vary depending on area of coverage

							
Spread (in)	30	15	21	18	15	15	18
Height (in)	18	18	16.5	30	30	24	18

							
Spread (in)	15	12	21	21	9	9	21
Height (in)	30	10	36	18	15	7	48

## SHADE



Grid represents 12"x12" Number of plants may vary depending on area of coverage

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Sun Plants:** *Butterfly Milkweed's* vivid orange blooms aren't just beautiful - they're crucial for Monarch butterfly survival, serving as both nectar sources for adults and a food their caterpillars can eat.

*Purple Coneflower* roots were traditionally used by Native Americans as medicine for various ailments. Today, echinacea remains popular in herbal supplements to boost immunity.

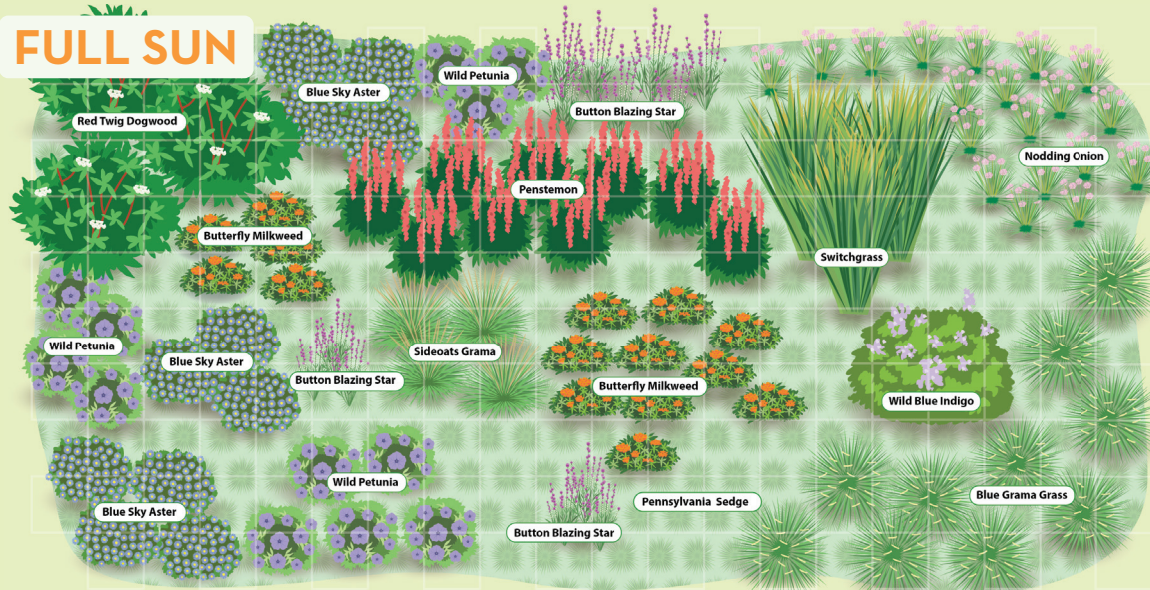
**Shade Plants:** *Wild Ginger* got its name from early settlers who noticed its roots smelled like ginger, though they aren't related to culinary ginger. Its unusual maroon flowers bloom at ground level, often hidden beneath the heart-shaped leaves.

*Virginia Bluebells* create spectacular spring displays before going dormant in summer, a strategy called "spring ephemeral" that allows them to complete their lifecycle before the tree canopy fills in.



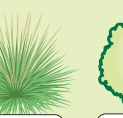
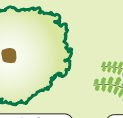



## Matrix Garden Design

Matrix planting mimics how plants grow in nature, with species intermingled rather than grouped. This technique relies on close spacing with a foundation of grasses, sedges, and perennials which supports a seasonal layer of forbs (flowers) and structural shrubs and trees. The result is a more naturalistic, lower-maintenance garden that resists weeds and adapts to changing conditions.

**Design Tip:** Like the traditional design, this layout can be modified for placement against structures by arranging height progressively. Substitutions can easily be made for the species listed.

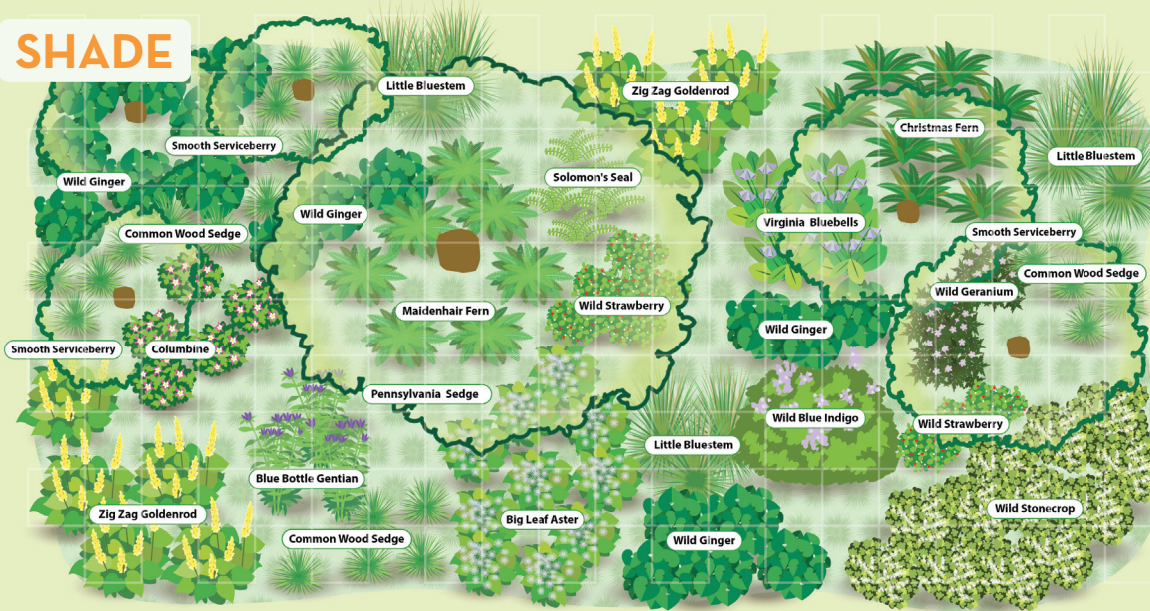


Grid represents 12"x12" Number of plants may vary depending on area of coverage

							
Spread (in)	15	102	21	210	15	30	15
Height (in)	18	90	24	270	21	60	18

							
Spread (in)	42	15	15	18	15	18	24
Height (in)	42	20	6	18	5	6	24

## SHADE



Grid represents 12"x12" Number of plants may vary depending on area of coverage

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Sun Plants:** *Red Twig Dogwood* provides year-round interest with white spring flowers, summer berries, and striking red stems that brighten winter landscapes. Native Americans used the flexible branches for basket weaving.

*Button Blazing Star's* unique button-shaped flower heads attract numerous pollinators and provide seeds for goldfinches in fall. Its deep taproots make it extremely drought-tolerant once established.

**Shade Plants:** *Christmas Fern* remains evergreen throughout winter, providing habitat and cover for wildlife when other plants have died back. It gets its name from its Christmas stocking-shaped leaflets.

*Blue Bottle Gentian* flowers never fully open, requiring large bumblebees to force their way in for pollination. These late-blooming beauties provide crucial fall nectar for pollinators preparing for winter.