



# Create Your Own State Park Wildflower Gardens

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Native plants naturally occur in the region in which they evolved. Because native plants are adapted to local soil and climate conditions, they require less watering and virtually no fertilizing. They attract and feed native insects which in turn feed native birds and small mammals. Native plants are the foundation for the food chain, regardless of geographic location.

## Did You Know?

- Some types of wildlife depend on only one type of plant for survival? This is often called the **Host Plant**. **Milkweed** is such a plant for the native **Monarch** butterfly.
- Native plants, once established, require almost no watering or maintenance and can help crowd out unwanted weeds.
- Native grasses can have roots deeper than **10 feet** - compared to a typical turf grass of only 3 inches!
- The Maryland State Flower - the **Black-eyed Susan** - is a native species.

## Activities

- ❑ **“Naturalize” a Patch of Lawn-** Sometimes, all you need to do is clear a space for native plants and they will thrive. If you have a patch of lawn where it is difficult to get grass to grow because it is too wet, too dry, or too shady - there are native plants that can thrive in such an environment. First, to get rid of the grass, you can simply lay out newspaper in several layers and wet it down. Cover the newspapers in leaves or mulch and keep moist for a couple of weeks. Before you know it - the grass will be gone, and you’ll have a blank “canvas” to start your garden masterpiece.
- ❑ **Research Native Plants for Your Area-** Pick out a few Native Plants species- either shrubs or perennial plants- to learn more about. If you don’t already have a garden this is a good time to plan for one. If you do have a garden, could you add any native plants to it? If you’re short on space, you can even grow native plants in a container on a balcony or patio! Be sure to label the native plants in your park- you can paint a rock with plant names or use a wood stake. Be creative!
- ❑ **Plant a Butterfly Garden-** Native plants are key for a successful butterfly garden. Your butterfly garden should have a variety of flowers and nectar sources for butterflies, plus host plants for caterpillars to feed on. Do some research to find out what the host plants are for your favorite butterfly species. Many other pollinators, like bees, moths and hummingbirds, will also benefit from this garden!
- ❑ **Make Wildflower “Seed Balls”-** Assemble seed balls for naturalizing with native plants! With a simple mixture of air-dry clay, potting soil and your favorite wildflower seeds, you can make your own seed balls. You can plant these in a garden or an area of your yard that you’d like to go “wild”.
- ❑ **Remove Invasive Species-** Many of Maryland’s State Parks are removing non-native and invasive species to help benefit native flora and fauna. Invasive species are ones that cause damage to natural habitats. Often these species have no natural checks and can quickly “grow out of control”. Invasive species can be plant, animal, or even fungus. Learn more about invasive species and try to remove some from your park. **Bonus Activity-** *Do a bit of research on your own and make a poster to educate others about one (or more!) of invasive species to be on the lookout for in Maryland!*

