



Common  
**NATIVE FLOWERS**  
OF INDIANA

# Table of Contents

The Importance of Native Plants . . . . .	2
Black-Eyed Susan . . . . .	3
Purple Coneflower . . . . .	4
Wild Bergamot . . . . .	5
Common Milkweed . . . . .	6
Swamp Milkweed . . . . .	7
Butterfly Weed . . . . .	8
Dutchman's Breeches . . . . .	9
Crimson-Eyed Rose Mallow . . . . .	10
Dense Blazing Star . . . . .	11
Bloodroot . . . . .	12
New England Aster . . . . .	13
Blue False Indigo . . . . .	14
Yellow Trout Lily . . . . .	15
Foxglove Beardtongue . . . . .	16
Common Mountain Mint . . . . .	17
Fire Pink . . . . .	18
Prairie Dock . . . . .	19
Joe-Pye Weed . . . . .	20
Common Boneset . . . . .	21
Goldenrod . . . . .	22
Glossary . . . . .	23
Caution & Credits . . . . .	24



# The Importance of Native Plants

## *Where did all the plants go?*

For most of history, the area now known as Indiana was covered with plants. But for the past 100 years, growing cities have had to destroy the areas where these native plants grow so we can have places to live, and farmers have had to clear even more land so they can plant food for us to eat.

**DEFINITION**  
Plants that are naturally found in an area are called **native plants**.

## *But I see plants all of the time*

When people moved in to the new cities and towns, they planted flowers and grass. But they didn't plant the kind of flowers and grasses that were from Indiana. They wanted to be new and different. They planted grass and flowers from all over the United States, and from all over the world.

## *Is that bad?*

Plants that are not native to Indiana need to be watered when it is too hot or it hasn't rained in a while, wasting lots of water. People often have to use chemicals to make them grow well. These chemicals can hurt animals, insects, other plants, and even people! When some of these plants escape from the garden, they can take over a field or forest, killing the native plants. Because they are not from Indiana, the birds, animals, and insects can't use them for food.

## *What can I do?*

Plant native plants in your yard or garden! Native plants from Indiana are used to the weather here. The rain that falls is the perfect amount. The temperature is not too hot or too cold. They are good food and shelter to wildlife.

## Black-Eyed Susan

*also known as Brown-Eyed Susan*



**Plant Size:** 1 to 3 feet tall

**Looks:** Bright yellow rays with dark brown center

**Blooms:** June - October

### DEFINITION

A **ray** looks like a flower petal, but is actually a kind of flower.

The “eye” of a black-eyed susan is made up of hundreds of tiny flowers. Each of these tiny flowers will become a tiny seed. What a feast for small birds! Feel the stem and leaves of this plant. What do you feel? Tiny hairs cover this plant to prevent insects such as ants from eating it!

### DID YOU KNOW?

Native Americans used the roots of black-eyed susans to treat snakebites and reduce swelling. The juice from the root was used to treat earaches.



## Purple Coneflower

*also known as Eastern Purple Coneflower*



**Plant Size:** 3 to 5 feet tall

**Looks:** Pink/Purple rays with spiky, brown center

**Blooms:** April - September

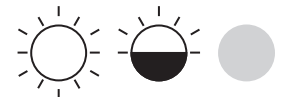
### DID YOU KNOW?

The scientific name, *echinacea purpurea*, comes from a Greek word that means hedgehog! Why do you think that is?

Butterflies and hummingbirds are attracted to the nectar in the hundreds of tiny brown, spiky flowers that resemble a hedgehog in the middle of the flower head. After the seeds form in late summer and early fall, gold finches will perch on top of the flower to feast on them.

### DEFINITION

Sometimes, what appears from a distance to be a single flower is actually a lot of tiny flowers grouped together. These flowers and their rays are called a **flower head**.



# Wild Bergamot

*also known as Beebalm, Monarda*



**Plant Size:** 1 to 6 feet tall

**Looks:** Long, tube-shaped flowers of red, pink, white, or purple

**Blooms:** May - September

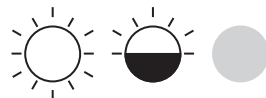
## DID YOU KNOW?

Some people believe that planting bergamot in your yard will help to keep mosquitoes away!

Wild bergamot is in the mint family, and therefore has a minty smell. The oil of the bergamot plant is still used today to flavor mint and other teas. The tubed-shape flower is perfect for hummingbirds, who are often seen feeding at these plants.

## FUN FACT

Native Americans used bergamot tea to relieve flatulence and bergamot oil or boiled leaves can be used to treat pimples!



# Common Milkweed



flower



seed

**Plant Size:** 3 to 5 feet tall

**Looks:** A large ball of little, light purple flowers.

**Blooms:** June - August

## FUN FACT

The milkweed plant gets its name from the milk-white sap it oozes when the stems or leaves are broken.

The common milkweed plant is recognizable by the long, single stem it grows on with thick leaves growing on either side all the way to the flowers. After the flowers bloom, they are replaced by large seed pods about 4 inches long that look like spiky pears. When the pods open, the air is filled with fluffy, white seeds!

## DID YOU KNOW?

The milkweed plant is the only plant a monarch butterfly caterpillar will eat. In August and September, look for tiny, fast-growing caterpillars on the leaves.





## Swamp Milkweed

*also known as Pleurisy Root, Pink Milkweed*



**Plant Size:** 3 to 5 feet tall

**Looks:** Tight clusters of tiny, light to dark pink flowers

**Blooms:** June - September

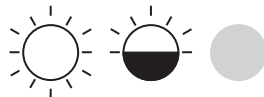
### DID YOU KNOW?

During World War II, the white, silky, fluffy seeds of the milkweed plant were used to stuff lifejackets!

The swamp milkweed plant, as its name suggests, loves swampy, moist areas, such as along ponds, ditches, and streams. When insects visit these flowers, their legs slide into gaps between the flowers and pick up pollen. Some insects become trapped when they aren't strong enough to pull their legs back out!

### FUN FACT

The milkweed plant is poisonous to both humans and animals, but Native Americans would drink a small amount of milkweed tea to get rid of parasitic worms.



## Butterfly Weed

*also known as Orange Milkweed, Pleurisy Root*



**Plant Size:** 1 to 3 feet tall

**Looks:** Tiny, bright orange flowers in 5 inch clusters

**Blooms:** June - August

### FUN FACT

Native Americans used the tough, stringy stems of milkweed plants to make ropes & cloth!

As its name suggests, butterflies and other insects will flock to the orange flowers of the butterfly weed. Aphids (tiny green bugs) also love to eat its leaves, so look for lady bugs hunting the aphids! Unlike its milkweed cousins, butterfly weed does not produce the milk-white sap that can irritate your skin and eyes.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Pleurisy is a lung condition that causes sharp pain when breathing. So why is this plant also known as pleurisy root? A tea made from its leaves was an official treatment for pleurisy until 1936.



## Dutchman's Breeches

*also known as Little Blue Stagers*



**Plant Size:** 1/2 to 1 foot tall

**Looks:** White flowers that look like upside-down pants

**Blooms:** March - May

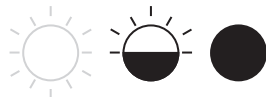
### DEFINITION

A **compound leaf** is a leaf that has several different parts connected to a single stem. These parts are called **leaflets**.

This early blooming spring plant has flowers that look like a pair of baggy pants hanging upside down. It has compound leaves that kind of look like ferns. This is one of the first plants to bloom on the forest floor. By June, the plant will completely disappear, leaves and all, only to reappear next spring. Don't touch it! It can cause a rash like poison ivy, although it usually lasts only a few minutes.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Some Native American tribes used this plant in love potions, other tribes used it to build muscles. It is also known as little blue staggers because of the drunken way cows would walk when they ate too much of it!



## Crimson-Eyed Rose Mallow

*also known as Swamp Mallow, Marshmallow Hibiscus*



**Plant Size:** 3 to 7 feet tall

**Looks:** Large, 5-petaled flowers of 6 - 9 inches across with large column of stamens in the middle

**Blooms:** July - September

### DEFINITION

The male part of the flower that makes pollen is called the **stamen**.

Most hibiscus plants are known as tropical flowers, but this variety is native to Indiana! Usually the flowers are white with a small, crimson circle in the middle. However, the flowers can also be pink or red, and they can grow up to 12 inches across! This plant will disappear over the winter, as if dead, but will regrow to full height late next spring.

### FUN FACT

The flowers of the crimson-eyed rose mallow will always open between 9 - 11 a.m. EST. The New York Botanical Garden used them to make a flower clock!



# Dense Blazing Star

also known as *Prairie Gay Feather*, *Dense Liatris*



**Plant Size:** 3 to 4 feet tall

**Looks:** Spikes of purple flowers, 6 - 12 inches high

**Blooms:** June - September

## DEFINITION

A **corm** is a swollen part of the stem formed underground by some plants to store nutrients for the winter.

Unlike most plants that produce a flower stalk, the flowers of this cousin to sunflowers and asters blooms from the top to the bottom, instead of from the bottom to the top. The flower heads are made of fluffy, feathery flowers, which are said to look like blazing stars. The stalk grows from an underground corm.

## FUN FACT

Native Americans used dense blazing star as a pain reliever and to make one go to the bathroom. It is still used as an insect repellent.



# Bloodroot



**Plant Size:** 1/2 to 1 foot tall

**Looks:** White flowers with bright yellow center

**Blooms:** March - May

## FUN FACT

Bloodroot gets its name from the fact that when you cut a leaf or stem, it looks like it's bleeding!

Each stem of this plant will have one flower and one leaf, which to begin with is wrapped around the flower bud. After the plants grow 3 or 4 inches tall, the flowers will begin to bloom. The flowers will only open on sunny days and will close again once the sun goes down. Each flower will only bloom for 1 or 2 days.

## DID YOU KNOW?

While the plant itself is poisonous to eat even a little, Native Americans would use bloodroot to create war paint and a red dye for clothing and baskets.





## New England Aster

*also known as Michaelmas Daisy*



**Plant Size:** 3 to 6 feet tall

**Looks:** Clusters of pink or purple flowers with centers of orange-yellow on thick stems

**Blooms:** August - October

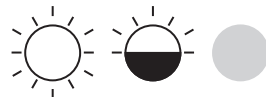
### DID YOU KNOW?

Michaelmas Day is September 29. Why do you think this flower is also called a Michaelmas Daisy?

Not very many flowers bloom in the fall, but the New England Aster is one of them. Because not many flowers can be found, it is an important source of nectar for bees and butterflies. Monarch butterflies are sure to stop on their way to Mexico.

### FUN FACT

Every living thing, plant or animal, also has a scientific name. Part of the scientific name for the New England Aster means "hair" because of the hairy feel of the underside of the plants leaves.



## Blue False Indigo

*also known as Blue Wild Indigo*



**Plant Size:** 3 to 4 feet tall

**Looks:** Blue-purple flowers on 12 inch long spikes

**Blooms:** May - July

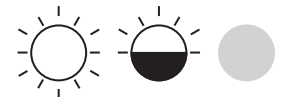
### FUN FACT

The seeds will rattle around in the pod once it turns black. Children would use them for rattles!

Blue False Indigo is in the pea family. While it grows up to 3 feet wide and looks like a bush, in the fall the stalks and leaves will turn a silvery color and dry out. It will often be blown away in a strong wind, like a tumbleweed. In the spring, it will regrow to its full size again!

### DID YOU KNOW?

When cut open, the sap of Blue False Indigo will turn purple. American colonists would use it to make dye. The color was similar to that made from the true indigo plant species found in Asia.





## Yellow Trout Lily

*also known as Adder's Tongue, Dogtooth Violet*



**Plant Size:** 1/2 foot tall

**Looks:** Yellow, downward pointing flowers with pistils and stamens sticking out

**Blooms:** March - May

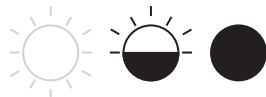
### DEFINITION

The hairy or sticky female part of a flower that traps pollen is called the **pistil**.

This plant is also known as adder's tongue because it grows two leaves with a single stalk between them which looks like the tongue of a snake. When the flowers open, the flower also looks like a snake with its tongue sticking out. It is called a trout lily because the splotchy color of its leaves looks like a brown or brook trout.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The leaves are not a solid color. They are a mixture of green, brown, and purple splotches. Why? Animals are color blind. These splotches help hide the plants in the dead leaves of the forest floor from hungry animals!



## Foxglove Beardtongue

*also known as Smooth White Penstemon*



**Plant Size:** 3 to 5 feet tall

**Looks:** White, tube-shaped flowers over 1 inch long

**Blooms:** April - July

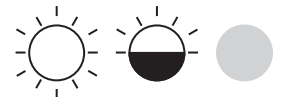
### FUN FACT

It's called beardtongue because one of the stamens in each flower has small hairs on it.

Clusters of 1 inch long white flowers with purple lines in them set this flower apart. Only one stamen has hair on it. When a bee enters the flower, the hair on the stamen catches on the hair on the bee, causing the other stamens to bend down and stick their pollen onto the bees back.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Part of the scientific name for Foxglove Beardtongue comes from the Latin word that means finger because the flowers look like the fingers of a glove!



## Common Mountain Mint

*also known as Virginia Mountain Mint*



**Plant Size:** 1 to 3 feet tall

**Looks:** Clusters of white flowers with purple spots

**Blooms:** July - September

### DID YOU KNOW?

Even though this plant is called mountain mint, it very rarely is found growing in the mountains!

This plant often looks like a bush from far away. Each flower head can have up to 50 tiny flowers in it! It gets its name from the fact that all parts of the plant will smell like mint when crushed. While nectar loving insects are attracted to this plant, leaf-eating insects and animals stay away because they don't like the minty smell!

### DEFINITION

Some plants, such as this one, spread quickly by using rhizomes. A **rhizome** is an underground stem that grows outwards from the parent plant and grows new roots and new plants.



## Fire Pink

*also known as Scarlet Catchfly*



**Plant Size:** 1 to 2 feet tall

**Looks:** Bright red flowers with 5 petals notched at end

**Blooms:** April - June

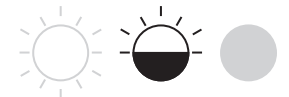
### FUN FACT

It's sometimes called a catchfly because of the sticky hairs that grow on the stem to keep ants from stealing its nectar.

Why is it called "pink" when it's not pink, but red? To "pink" something means to make notches or a pattern along its edges. Pinking shears are scissors that cut a zig-zag pattern instead of a straight line. This plant is called a pink because of the notches on the end of its petals!

### DID YOU KNOW?

Some Native American tribes thought this plant was poisonous, but others used it to treat anxiety. Some scientists today are testing it for use as an antibiotic.



# Prairie Dock

*also known as Prairie Rosinweed*



**Plant Size:** 3 to 10 feet tall

**Looks:** Loose clusters of yellow sunflower-like flowers

**Blooms:** July - September

## DEFINITION

**Resin** is a thick, sticky substance that some plants make, such as pine trees. It is much thicker than normal sap.

The flowers of the prairie dock plant are about 2 -3 inches across. However, its leaves are 18 inches long and 12 inches wide! As the leaves get older and bigger, they begin to feel rougher. When they are fully grown, they feel like sandpaper!

## FUN FACT

This plant is also called rosinweed because when it is cut or injured, it oozes lots and lots of resin. This resin tastes like a mixture of carrots and pine, and can be used as chewing gum!



# Joe-Pye Weed

*also known as Trumpetweed*



**Plant Size:** 3 to 6 feet tall

**Looks:** Purple stems with clusters of pink or purple flowers on top

**Blooms:** July - October

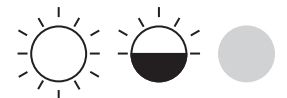
## FUN FACT

Native Americans would make a bath with Joe-Pye Weed to help a sick child go to sleep.

There are two common kinds of joe-pye weed in Indiana - spotted joe-pye weed and sweet joe-pye weed. Spotted joe-pye weed has purple-spotted stems and usually has between 8 - 22 florets in each flower head. Sweet joe-pye weed has solid purple stems and only 4-7 florets in each flower head.

## DID YOU KNOW?

It is not known exactly how Joe-Pye weed got its name. Perhaps it got its name because the plant was used to cure typhoid fever. The Native American word for typhoid is "jopi".



## Common Boneset

*also known as American Boneset, Thoroughwort*



**Plant Size:** 3 to 5 feet tall

**Looks:** Clusters of fluffy white flowers on top of stems with long white hairs

**Blooms:** June-September

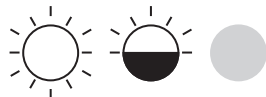
### DID YOU KNOW?

Native Americans used boneset to help heal broken bones. Maybe that is why it is called boneset.

Boneset is closely related to the joe-pye weed. There are not many other plants with bright white flowers that bloom in late summer. It really stands out! Sometimes boneset plants are called thoroughworts because it looks like the stems grow right through the middle of a pair of leaves!

### FUN FACT

Boneset tea is used to treat colds and flus and to help make fevers go away. It was used to treat a flu called "break bone fever" over 200 years ago. Some people think that is why the plant is called boneset.



## Goldenrod

*also known as Goldentop*



**Plant Size:** 1 to 10 feet tall

**Looks:** Lots of tiny bright yellow flowers in thick pyramid-shaped clusters

**Blooms:** June-October

### FUN FACT

Native Americans used goldenrod to make a yellow dye, as well as a tea to treat stomach problems.

There are over 20 kinds of goldenrod in Indiana! Two of the most common are the early goldenrod and the showy goldenrod. Early goldenrod starts to bloom in June and is often seen covering corn fields. Showy goldenrod blooms later and its clusters of flowers don't droop as other goldenrods do. Beware! Many kinds of goldenrod are invasive and will take over your garden.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Goldenrod is often thought to cause hay fever and allergies, but it doesn't! Usually the cause is a plant called ragweed which blooms at the same time as many kinds of goldenrod.





## Glossary

**compound leaf** - a leaf that has several different parts connected to a single stem.

**corm** - a swollen part of the stem formed underground by some plants to store nutrients for the winter.

**flower head** - a group of tiny flowers and their rays that appear to be a single flower when looked at from a distance.

**native plants** - plants that are naturally found in an area.

**leaflets** - the parts of a compound leaf.

**pistil** - the female part of a flower that traps pollen. It is usually hairy or sticky.

**ray** - a kind of flower that looks like a flower petal.

**resin** - a thick, sticky substance that some plants make. It is much thicker than normal sap.

**rhizome** - an underground stem that grows outwards from the parent plant and grows new roots and new plants.

**stamen** - the male part of the flower that makes pollen.

## Caution & Credits



*Poison Ivy*

When you are out exploring and looking at plants, be on the lookout for poison ivy! Poison ivy causes most people to break out in an itchy rash that can last up to 30 days. The rash is caused by an invisible oil the plant makes. The oil is easily spread, even from touching your shoes after walking through the ivy. Poison Ivy can grow on the ground or on trees. "Leaves of 3, let it be!"


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