

OHIO NATIVE PLANTS

Lesson developed by: Sue Worstall, Summit County Master Gardener Volunteer



Source: ohionativeplantmonth.org

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

- ❖ A nature appreciation activity to use as a 1:1 cart activity or with small or large groups, which encourages participants to learn about native plants and to recall some of these in their experiences. Photos can be enlarged and copied for activity.

WHAT ARE NATIVE PLANTS?

Native Plants are *completely adapted* to our growing conditions in Ohio. They have evolved over thousands of years to thrive in our climate. They are comfortable with the amount of rainfall we receive, the unique soils in our regions, our hot humid summers and our cold winters. Because of this, native plants often grow better in our gardens than non-native plants. And once established, native plants typically require less water and less maintenance than many non-native plants. That's a win-win, for both the environment and for us as gardeners.

From perennial wildflowers to berrying shrubs to majestic canopy trees, native plants are beautiful and functional choices for any landscape. Many are just as ornamental as common exotics.

IMPORTANCE TO POLLINATORS

Another primary reason native plants are important is that they are a *source of food* for our native bees, butterflies, insects, caterpillars, birds, and all wildlife. Wildlife like bees and butterflies need the sweet nectar and pollen from flowers for survival. Native caterpillars need tender plant leaves for survival. And some birds eat seeds produced by plants later in the summer. Wildlife that do *not* eat plants directly, feed on insects or other animals that typically feed directly on plants. Plants are critical to the survival of all wildlife.

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State Wildflower: Ohio's state wildflower is the Great White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*). This beautiful spring woodland flower is shown in the logo in the next column. Found in all counties of Ohio, this woodland wildflower became the state flower in 1986.

State Native Fruit: Since the tomato, a non-native plant, was already the state fruit, it was decided that Ohio needed a state *native* fruit. In 2009 the Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) was designated as Ohio's native fruit. Growing throughout most of the Eastern United States, pawpaw fruits have been enjoyed since the 1500's. The pawpaw tree has become popular in this state and is grown in many arboretums and yards (photo below).



Fruit - <https://static.inaturalist.org/photos/112359890/> (Meghan Pierce)

Flower - <https://inaturalist-open-data.s3.amazonaws.com/photos/113592340/> (bmiller001)

APRIL IS OHIO NATIVE PLANT MONTH

On July 18, 2019, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine signed House Bill 59 of the 133 General Assembly into law designating the month of April as Ohio Native Plant Month. This legislation makes Ohio one of the first states in the country to have an entire month dedicated to our native plants!

Ohio House Bill 59 States: "The month of April is designated as 'Ohio Native Plant Month' to increase public awareness of Ohio's native plants and the many benefits they provide to pollinators, Ohio's economy, and the health of Ohio's environment."



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QUESTIONS:

- ❖ What native plants do you remember from when you grew up?
- ❖ Were there woods nearby where you could search for mayapples, mushrooms, trilliums, and ferns?
- ❖ Did you have wild strawberries, columbines, or black-eyed susans in your yard?
- ❖ Did you have dogwood, redbud or cottonwood trees in any of your yards?
- ❖ Did you ever pick elderberries or raspberries, to eat or for pies or jam?

SOME NATIVE PLANTS OF OHIO**Woody plants****Elderberry bush**

Seen along road-sides and in fields. Berries mature in late summer and are often picked for pies and jam.



<https://inaturalist-open-data.s3.amazonaws.com/photos/113311163/> (Gavin Nupp)

Trumpet creeper

Vigorous vine, blooms June-September. Often seen growing on utility poles; pink, orange or red flowers. Loved by hummingbirds, orioles and some moths.



<https://static.inaturalist.org/photos/106567110/> (Su Snyder)

Woodland plants**Bloodroot**

Flowers March-May, white blooms last few days. Root sap used in some toothpastes. Food source for early bees.



<https://inaturalist-open-data.s3.amazonaws.com/photos/111121441/> (Banker)

Jack-in-the-Pulpit

Grows 1-2' tall, flowers May-June. Said to resemble a preacher in his canopied pulpit. Bright red-orange fruit later in year.

<https://static.inaturalist.org/photos/111125178/> (Bob Burns)

**Sun/Prairie****Purple coneflower**

Large daisy-like flower with swept-back reddish-purple petals. Attracts butterflies and bees. Birds eat the seeds. Some medicinal uses.

<https://static.inaturalist.org/photos/102190504/> (Bob Burns)

**Common milkweed**

Flowers June-August on 2-3' stems. Monarch butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed varieties. The leaves are eaten by the monarch larvae. Seeds blow from the pods in autumn.

<https://static.inaturalist.org/photos/111985344/> (Su Snyder)

**RESOURCES**

You'll find much interesting information and resources all year long at <https://www.ohionativeplantmonth.org/>

- ❖ List of Ohio native plants
- ❖ How to plant a pocket pollinator garden
- ❖ Beautiful photos of native plants and pollinators
- ❖ Where to buy native plants

Contact Information:

If you have any questions about this activity, please email mgsummitcounty@gmail.com. We hope you benefitted from this activity. Please let us know if you utilized this with a quick email to the above address. Please send your name, facility name, number of participants involved in this activity, and your feedback for improvement so we can measure our impact and improve this product. Thank you!