



**GENUS
LOCI**

ECOLOGICAL
LANDSCAPES INC.

Landscape Architecture
Landscape Construction
Ecological Restoration



GROW NATIVE: Landscaping With Native Plants



Genus Loci actively promotes the use of native species in all landscapes. We make a point of educating all our clients about the importance of native plants, and our projects always incorporate a selection of native species, sometimes exclusively and sometimes in combination with non-invasive horticultural exotics. Here's why.

Historically, non-native "exotic" plants and their cultivars have dominated both the Canadian garden and the nursery trades. Originating from around the world, exotic species have been valued by gardeners for their unique features, such as their distinctive forms, foliage textures, and/or their bold, colorful flowers.



In recent years, the ecological problems associated with some of these exotic plants have come to light. In Ontario alone, over 700 exotic tree, shrub and perennial species have colonized woodlands, wetlands, shorelines and other natural habitats. Many are "garden escapees", plants whose seed dispersal and reproductive methods have facilitated their migration from the garden into the wild.

Although the majority of these exotics are relatively benign, some are considered invasive and have the ability to displace native species in their natural habitats. Purple Loosestrife is perhaps the best-known invasive species, having invaded wetlands across Canada. Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*), the single most popular street and shade tree in Ontario, is highly invasive and poses one of the most significant threats to Ontario's rural and urban woodlands. Many other popular horticultural exotic tree and shrub species, including European Birch, Scots Pine, European Mountain Ash, European Highbush Cranberry, Japanese Honeysuckle, Periwinkle, Yellow Flag Iris, Tansy, and Lily of the Valley, Oriental Bittersweet and English Ivy are all considered invasive to some degree.

At the very least, invasive horticultural species – especially ones with wind- or bird-dispersed seeds – should never be planted within 200 metres of existing natural areas. And, from an ecological standpoint, it really is best to eschew invasive exotics altogether. This is where native plants come in.

The Native Alternative



Native plants are excellent alternatives to invasive exotics and will embellish your garden while contributing to a healthier environment. Many native plants rival more common exotics in terms of their beauty and interest, and they can also provide food and shelter for local birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Furthermore, native plants are generally better adapted to local soils and climate and, if carefully selected for site conditions, generally demand little or no maintenance once established. [Continue...>](#)

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A Native Alternative con't.

Foamflower (*Tiarella cordata*), Blazing Star (*Liatris* spp), Bee Balm (*Monarda* spp.), Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia Canadensis*), and the countless species of Asters and Goldenrod are just a few of the attractive native Ontario perennials that are now commercially available at nurseries and garden centres. Many native trees and shrubs, such as Red Oak, Sugar Maple, White Pine, Serviceberry, Black Cherry, American Mountain Ash, Highbush Cranberry and Elderberry are excellent alternatives to some of the invasive exotic tree and shrub species noted above.

Like horticultural species, native plants can be used to create formal or semi-formal gardens and landscapes. They can be used either in combination with

non-invasive exotic species, or on their own in a native only landscape. Many native species specifically adapted to local annual rainfall rates and are therefore ideally suited to xeriscapes and water efficient gardens.



Some make great groundcovers, and are also perfect for low-maintenance "naturalized" or "habitat" gardens, such as wildflower meadows. Many native wood-

land species are ideal for shade gardens, and a large number of Ontario's native wetland species are perfect for bog gardens, aquatic plantings, and pond shorelines.

We believe native plant selections for landscape projects should be based at least in part on species indigenous to your immediate local area or bioregion. The native plant palette can be further diversified by also including those species that may not occur locally, but which are indigenous to Ontario (or north-eastern North America) and are suited to the planting site's climatic zone. Used in combination with non-invasive exotic horticultural species, these native plants are sure to enrich any garden or

landscape, will help protect and restore our natural heritage, and will help foster an appreciation of our sense of place in the natural world.

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