

GARDEN-WORTHY NATIVE PLANTS

A Highly Opinionated Guide to Landscape-Friendly Indiana Natives

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Spotts Garden Service, Indianapolis, IN ©Amy Mullen

IN THIS SESSION...



- What's a native?
- Why native plants?
- Top shrubs and grasses
- Planting combos
- Sources and more information
- Underlined text is a link throughout

ABOUT ME: AMY MULLEN



Complete nerd.

Fascinated by intersection
of ecology and horticulture.

Ruthlessly practical.

Snappy dresser.

ABOUT SPOTTS GARDEN SERVICE



Garden design, build, and maintenance

Organic and sustainable gardening

Primarily urban, residential gardens inside the 465 loop.

WHAT'S A NATIVE PLANT?



- A plant existing in natural communities since before European contact.
- Native plants are straight species. e.g. *Panicum virgatum*
- Named cultivars of native species may be called **nativars**. e.g.. *Panicum virgatum* 'Shenandoah'

IN THIS PRESENTATION...



- “Native” = straight species is native to Indiana.
- Nativars are included.
- **Right plant right place!** Just because it’s native doesn’t mean it will thrive in your conditions.

WHY NATIVES? WILDLIFE



- Are the base of the food chain for local ecosystems.
- Support more insects than exotics (4x more attractive to native bees)
- Provide habitat and way stations for wildlife, including pollinators, other insects, birds, etc.

WHY NATIVES? BIODIVERSITY



- **Keystone species** support disproportionate number of species of moths and butterflies.
- National Wildlife Federation keystone genera for Eastern Temperate Forest

WHY NATIVES? SUSTAINABILITY



- Natives are problem solvers! Evolved to cope with local conditions.
- Need little extra water or food.
- Have checks on their growth.
- Don't become invasive (but some **are** aggressive).

WHY NATIVES? BEAUTY



Native plants suit the *genus loci*: the spirit of the place.

Today, we're focusing on the ones appropriate for garden use.

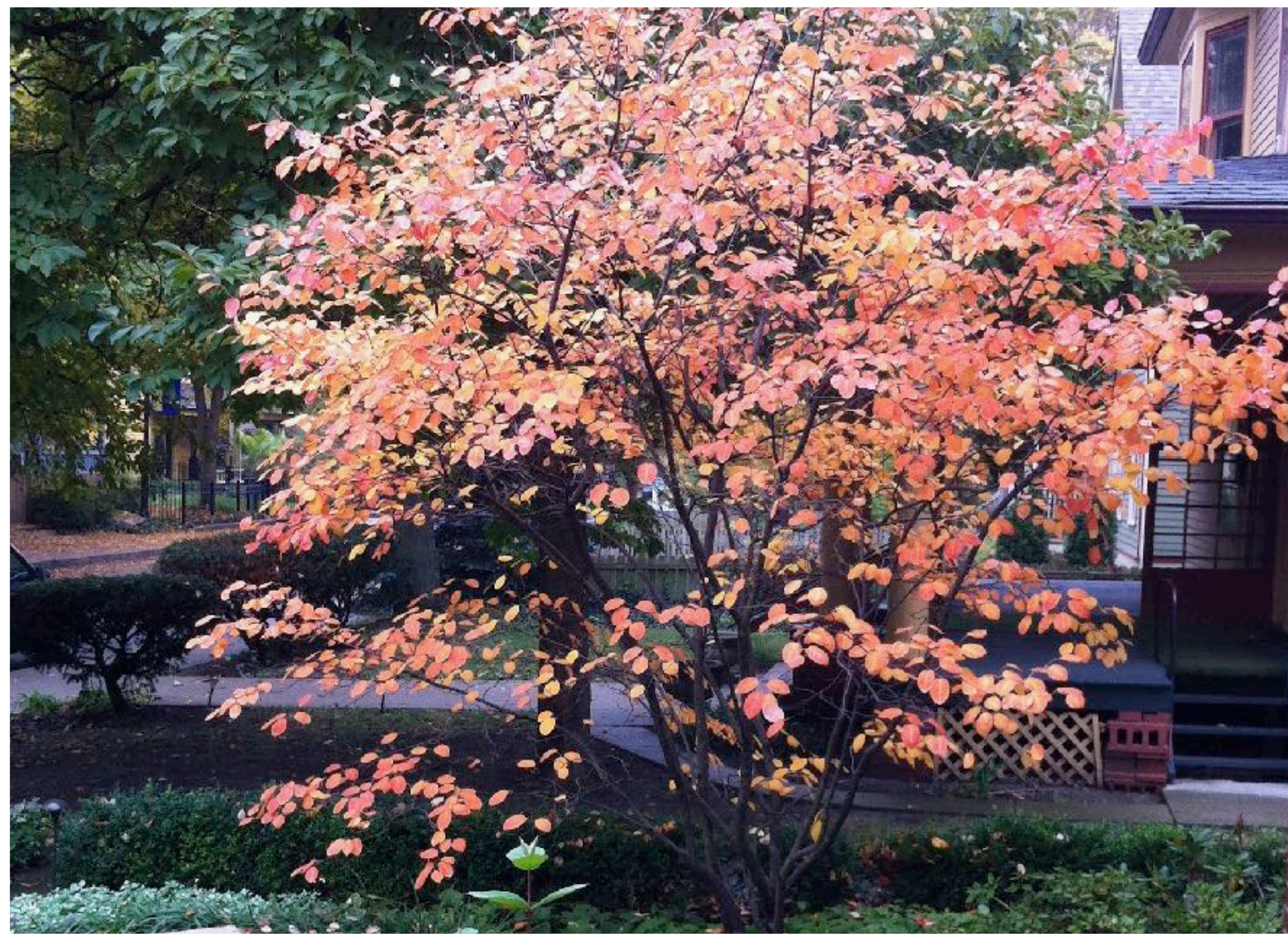
EVEN ONE PLANT COUNTS!



You don't have to give up your non-native plants.

Mt. Cuba Center encourages "native by addition," adding one native species to every garden.

AMELANCHIER: SERVICEBERRIES



- Keystone genus, several native species. Big shrubs/small trees.
- Early spring flowers, edible berries
- Butterfly host plant.
- Full sun to light shade.
- Use as focal point or in border.
- Faves: *Amelanchier x grandiflora* 'Autumn Brilliance', *A. x grand.* 'Robin Hill,' *A. laevis*

ARONIA MELANOCARPA: BLACK CHOKEBERRY



- AKA *Photinia*
- Spring flowers; tart, edible berries; brilliant fall color; excellent for wildlife.
- Full sun to part shade; looser in more shade. Average to boggy soil.
- Deer resistant.
- Faves: 'Iroquois Beauty,' 'Low Scape Mound,' 'Autumn Magic'

CEPHALANTHUS OCCIDENTALIS: BUTTON BUSH



- Sputnik-like flowers that pollinators and hummingbirds love followed by red fruits for birds.
- Full to part sun; needs consistently moist soil.
- Deer resistant.
- Faves: 'Sugar Shack' (4'x4'), 'Fiber Optics' (6'x6')

CORNUS SERICEA: RED-TWIG DOGWOOD



- White flowers in spring, white berries, brilliant red or yellow stems in winter.
- Full sun to part shade, consistently moist soil.
- Deer resistant.
- Best color on new stems.
- Faves: 'Cardinal,' 'Arctic Fire,' 'Budd's Yellow'

HYDRANGEA ARBORESCENS: SMOOTH HYDRANGEA



- THE shrub for part shade. Can take morning sun.
- White flowers shade to green and burgundy. Flowers on new growth.
- Choose straight species for pollinators.
- Faves: Straight species, *H. arborescens* 'Annabelle'

ILEX VERTICILLATA: WINTERBERRY



- Early flowers, brilliant fruit in winter
- Full sun to part shade; average to very boggy soils. Super for rain gardens.
- Plant both male and female for berries
- Gorgeous *en masse*, but works in mixed border too.
- Deer resistant.
- Favorite cultivars: 'Red Sprite' (F), 'Jim Dandy' (M); Berry Poppins' (F), 'Mr. Poppins'

ITEA VIRGINICA: SWEETSPIRE



- White flowers attract butterflies.
- Full (but not hot) sun to part shade.
- Average to boggy soil. Good choice for rain gardens in shady areas.
- Deer resistant.
- Faves: 'Little Henry,' 'Henry's Garnet,' 'Scentlandia'

HAMAMELIS VIRGINIANA: WITCH HAZEL



- Fragrant, ribbon-like blooms
- Unlike other witch hazels, blooms in late fall.
- Full sun to part shade in average soil. Rain gardens (on slope).
- Deer resistant.
- 15' to 20'; can be pruned into a small tree for focal point.

LINDERA BENZOIN: SPICEBUSH



- Butterfly host plant, terrific fall color
- Super early flowers, great for forcing.
- Fruit is edible; used as a spice
- Full sun to **full shade**
- Deer resistant

PHYSOCARPUS OPULIFOLIUS: NINEBARK



- Straight species is green; purple-leafed and gold-leafed cultivars.
- Small pink flowers in spring.
- Full sun to very light shade. Species can take tough soil.
- Faves: 'Little Devil,' 'Summer Wine,' 'Lemon Candy'

VIBURNUM DENTATUM: ARROWWOOD



- Spring flowers followed by edible fruits (not a lot of flesh on them); good for wildlife
- Host plant for butterflies
- Full sun to light shade; average soil.
- Deer resistant.
- Faves: 'Blue Muffin,' 'Chicago Lustre', 'Autumn Jazz'

SEDGES ARE THE SOLUTION!



- Indiana has more than 150 native species of sedge.
- I use them to underplant trees and shrubs, in meadows and prairies, for texture in borders, and as lawn replacements.

CAREX: SUN SEDGES



- *C. brevior* (Plains oval sedge): full sun to part shade, seasonally wet to dry; 12" to 14" tall
- *C. muskingumensis* 'Little Midge' (Palm sedge) full sun to part shade; moist to wet; 8" to 12"

CAREX: SHADE SEDGES



- *C. radiata* (Eastern star sedge) part shade; avg to moist; 8" to 12"
- *C. woodii* (pretty sedge): part shade to full shade, seasonally wet to dry; 6" to 12"

CAREX: LAWN SEDGES



- Use at full height or mow three times a year to about 4"
- *C. pensylvanica* (Pennsylvania sedge) part to full shade; avg to dry; 12"
- *C. texensis* (Texas sedge): part shade, seasonally wet to dry; 6" to 12" (good sub for liriope)

PANICUM VIRGATUM: SWITCHGRASS



- Upright and substantial with fine seedheads
- Full sun; average soil. Can tolerate flooding and drought.
- Deer resistant
- Faves: 'Cheyenne Sky,' 'Shenandoah,' 'Northwind,'

SCHIZACHYRIUM SCOPARIUM: LITTLE BLUESTEM



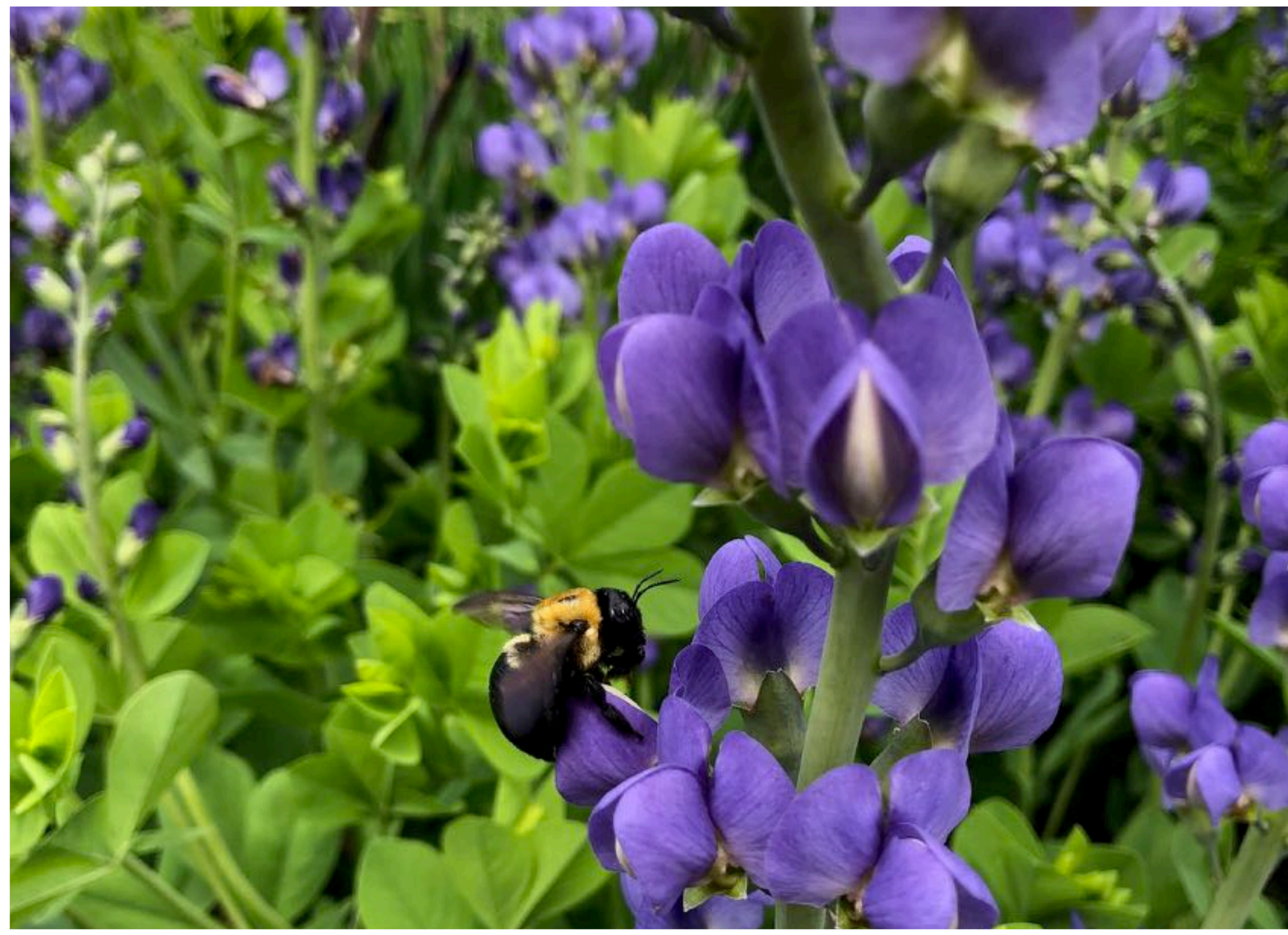
- Metallic blue color in summer, various fall shades
- Upright and stiff
- Full sun, average to dry soil. Deer resistant.
- Faves: 'Carousel,' 'The Blues'

SPOROBOLUS HETEROLEPIS: PRAIRIE DROPSEED



- Fine textured, short grass.
- Tall seedheads summer into fall
- Looks best massed for effect (with backlight if you can manage it!)
- Full sun; average to dry soil

MY TOP TEN PERENNIALS FOR SUN



- *Amsonia tabermontana* (bluestar; 'Storm Cloud,' x 'Blue Ice'; spring)
- *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed; summer)
- *Baptisia australis* (false indigo; 'Blueberry Sundae,' 'SolarFlare'; spring)
- *Coreopsis grandiflora* (Tickseed; C. x 'Uptick' series; late spring to summer)
- *Echinacea purpurea* (coneflower; 'Magnus,' 'Kim's Knee High,' mid- to late summer)

MY TOP TEN PERENNIALS FOR SUN



- *Penstemon digitalis* 'Husker Red' (Beardtongue, midsummer)
- *Physostegia virginiana* (Obedient plant; 'Miss Manners;' midsummer to early fall)
- *Rudbeckia fulgida* 'American Gold Rush' (Black-eyed Susan; late summer)
- *Solidago rugosum* 'Fireworks' (Goldenrod; fall)
- *Symphotrichum novae-angliae* 'Purple Dome' (New England aster, fall)

MY TOP TEN NATIVES FOR SHADE



- *Asarum canadense* (Wild ginger; early spring)
- *Aquilegia canadensis* (Columbine; spring)
- *Athyrium felix-femina* (Lady fern; 'Lady in Red')
- *Geranium maculatum* (Cranesbill; late spring to early summer)
- *Heuchera americana* (Coral bells; 'Dale's Strain', 'Green Spice;' late summer)

MY TOP TEN NATIVES FOR SHADE



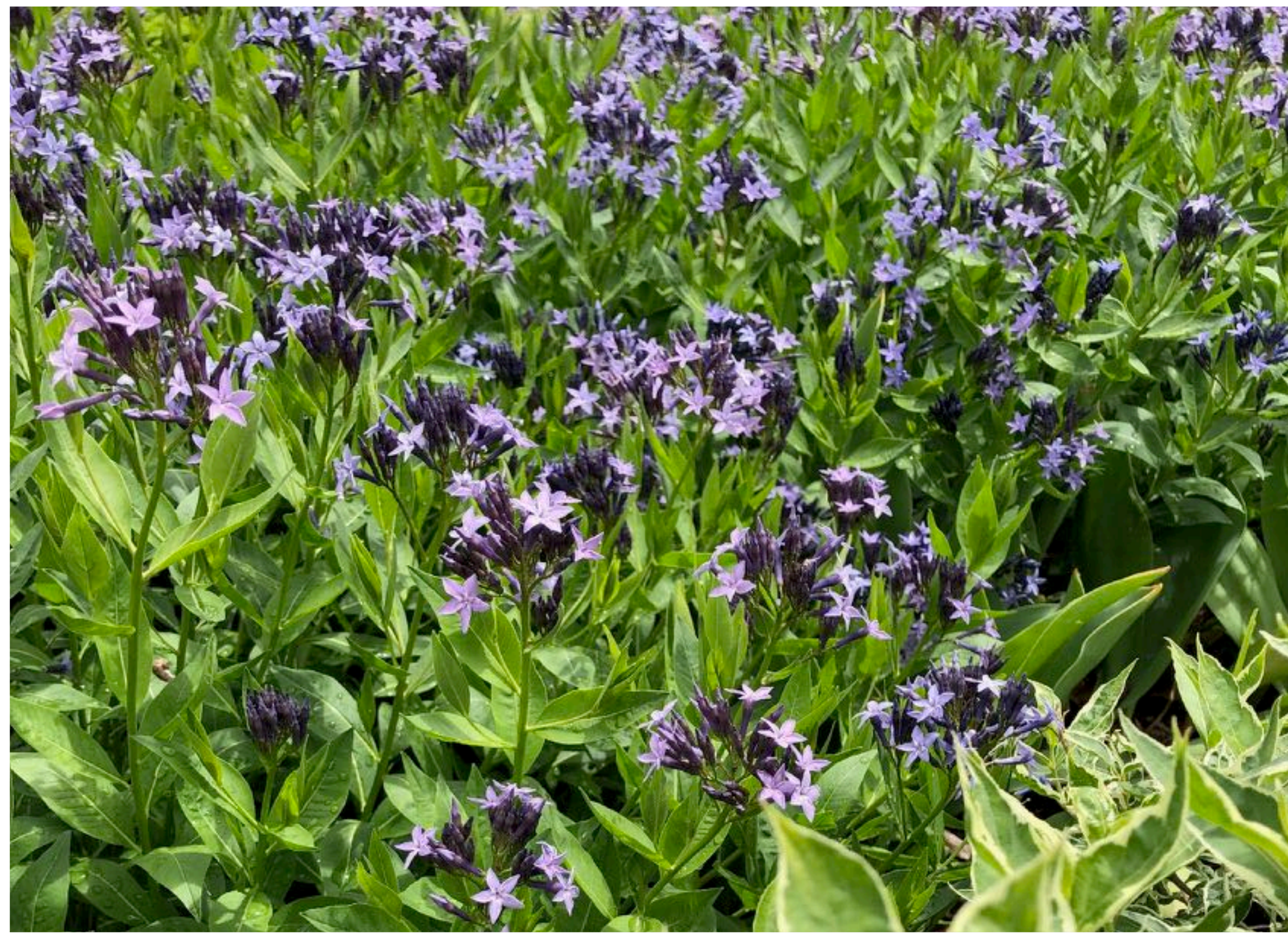
- *Heuchera villosa* (Hairy alumroot; 'Autumn Bride,' 'Pistache;' late summer)
- *Phlox divaricata* (Woodland phlox; late spring)
- *Polystichum acrostichoides* (Christmas fern)
- *Thalictrum dioicum* (Early meadow rue; late spring)
- *Tiarella cordifolia* (Foamflower; late spring)

BUILDING COMBINATIONS

- Plant in layers; cover the ground completely.
 - Use plants that prefer the same light and moisture.
 - Focus on form and foliage.
 - Contrast forms: rounded / vertical /spreading.
 - Create overlapping bloom throughout the year.
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BEE BUFFET

SUN TO PART SHADE; AVERAGE SOIL



- *Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Tiny Wine' (ninebark; spring)
- *Amsonia* x 'Blue Ice' (bluestar; spring)
- *Coreopsis* 'Uptick Cream and Red' (Tickseed hybrid; late spring to late summer)
- *Penstemon digitalis* 'Husker Red' (Beardtongue; early to mid-summer)
- *Symphotrichum novae-angliae* 'Purple Dome' (New England aster; fall)
- Underplant *Heuchera americana* 'Dale's Strain'

RAINY DAY

SUN TO PART SHADE; AVERAGE TO WET SOIL



- *Conus sericea* 'Cardinal' (Red-twig dogwood)
- *Hibiscus moscheutos* 'Cranberry Crush' (Swamp mallow; summer)
- *Eupatorium fistulosum* 'Gateway' (Joe Pye weed; summer)
- *Chelone glabra* in part shade (Turtlehead; late summer to fall) **OR**
- *Physostegia virginiana* in full sun (Obedient plant; summer to early fall)
- Underplant *Carex muskingumensis* 'Little Midge'

POCKET PRAIRIE

FULL SUN TO LIGHT SHADE; AVERAGE TO DRY SOIL



- *Schizachyrium scoparium* (little bluestem; species or cultivar)
- *Carex brevior* (plains oval sedge)
- *Baptisia australis* (false indigo, late spring)
- *Agastache foeniculum* (anise hyssop; all summer)
- *Echinacea purpurea* (purple coneflower; late summer)
- *Eryngium yuccifolium* (rattlesnake master; late summer)
- *Solidago rugosum* 'Fireworks' (goldenrod; fall)

DRY SHADE STALWARTS

PART TO FULL SHADE; AVERAGE TO DRY SOIL



- *Carex pensylvanica* (Pennsylvania sedge)
- *Dentaria lacinata* (Toothwort; early spring)
- *Thalictrum dioicum* (Early meadow rue; spring)
- *Phlox divaricata* (Woodland phlox; late spring)
- *Heuchera villosa* 'Autumn Bride' (Hairy alumroot; mid- to late summer)
- *Poylstichum acrostichoides* (Christmas fern; summer to fall)

WOODLAND CREEKSIDE PART TO FULL SHADE; AVERAGE TO MOIST SOIL



- *Itea virginica* (Sweetspire; spring)
- *Carex radiata* (Eastern star sedge)
- *Mertensia virginiana* (Virginia bluebells; spring ephemeral)
- *Asarum canadense* (Wild ginger; late spring)
- *Geranium maculatum* (Cranesbill; late spring to midsummer)
- *Tiarella cordifolia* (Foamflower)

RESOURCES



- [Indiana Native Plant Society](#)
 - Mt. Cuba Center: Botanic garden dedicated to natives of the Eastern Temperate Forest
 - [Biota of North America Program](#): list of native plants by genera; easiest way to see what's native to your area.
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RESOURCES



[Homegrown National Park](#)

[The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation's Bring Back the Pollinators](#) campaign.

[The National Wildlife Federation's Certified Wildlife Habitat](#) program

NATIVE PLANT SOURCES



Woody Warehouse: native trees and shrubs in Lizton, IN.
Native Plants Unlimited local, seasonal plant sales.
Preorders start February 2.

NATIVE PLANT SOURCES



[Naturally Native Nursery](#) in South Bend has plugs and sells online.

[Possibility Place Nursery](#) in Monee, IL sells online or in person.

[Prairie Moon Nursery](#) sells plants online, but only early in the season. They sell out, so order now.

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THANK YOU!



For more about natives and other
earth-friendly gardening, visit us online
[Spotts Garden Service](#)

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