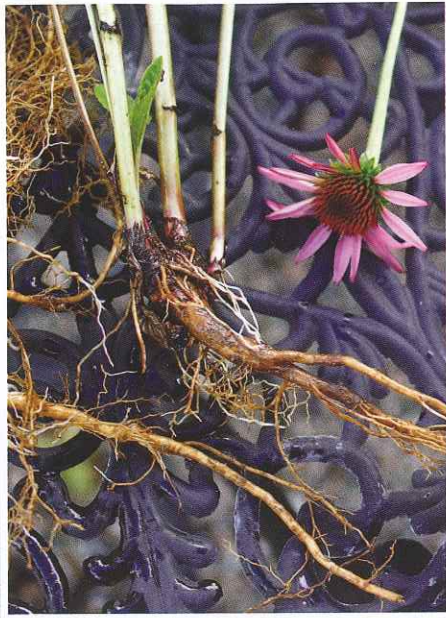


Native Plant Species are Beautiful and Tough!

By David Mow, Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District



When planning the landscape in your yard, consider native plant species. Not only are native plants better for insects, but they

also require less water and maintenance once they are established. If you plant prairie type plants, they naturally have roots that will grow very deep and be able to find water. They are genetically made to hold up in months of drought and heat with little maintenance. The deep growing roots also break up the hard layers of the soil to allow the water to penetrate deeper into the subsoil, reducing the runoff that causes flooding and erosion. As the roots break down, they also help the fertility of the soil and sequester carbon. There are many natural prairie regions in the northern part of Indiana and that is why the soil up there is so black. Ornamental plants, vegetables, and turf grass do not have the root system that grows deep like native plants. They have been developed for their own purposes, just like some plants do better in containers than others.

Many woodland species of native plants usually grow quite a bit in the spring and may go dormant during the summer, having gotten their energy early in the year before

the trees around them leaf out. So, they are not as affected by drought because they are already in a dormant state by the time the weather reaches a hot and dry season. If you have a lot of trees in your yard, they will help cool down the area and provide humidity for the other plants. They also help slow water runoff, and their roots will run deep like the other native species.

The grass in your yard only has roots that go down 6 inches and can be severely affected by a drought because the short roots cannot reach deep into the topsoil and get the moisture the plants need. Native grasses and prairie plants roots will go down 6 – 20 feet. If you have an erosion problem, these are the plants you want to hold the soil and they will do well in a drought.

The IDNR has compiled a list of native seed providers that can be found at https://www.in.gov/dnr/fish-and-wildlife/files/fw-Seed_Suppliers.pdf

There are a lot of recommended plants for any kind of habitat from Indiana Native Plant Society <https://indiananativeplants.org/>



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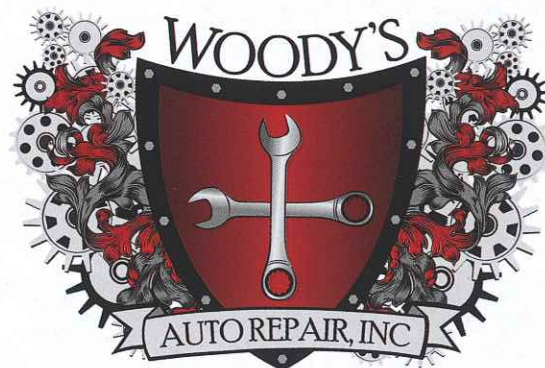
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