

# Establish and Maintain Your Native Plants

## Preparing Your Site

The process to get a new area ready for a native plant is the same as any other plant you'd use for gardening or landscaping. After you have selected a location that's right for your particular plant species (see the UP Native Plants guide on our website to see what soils and light conditions are best), clear away all the loose materials and eliminate any existing weeds or grass through either hand-pulling or suppression (e.g., using sheet mulching, plastic, boards, etc.). Adding landscape fabric is another great way to keep grass and weeds at bay.

Once your site is ready, dig a hole wide enough to completely spread out the plant roots and deep enough so that the plant, when set in the hole, will be at the level it was in its plug container. Be sure to remove any existing roots that are present in the hole.

## Planting

Fall is a perfect time of year for planting thanks to the moist and cool conditions. Try to avoid planting on a hot or sunny day; keep your plant moist and cool in the meantime.

On the day of planting, make sure your plant's container soil is moist. Press up and down the sides of the container to loosen the soil, and then gently pull the plant out by the base of its stem. You should be able to see some of the roots; gently pull them slightly apart and prune any that are broken or badly kinked. Make a small mound of dirt at the bottom of your hole. Place your plant inside the hole and arrange the roots around the mound so that they point outward. Make sure your plant is at roughly the same depth as it was in its container. When you replace the soil in your hole, it should cover the roots but not the stem.

Push soil down firmly to remove any air pockets. Use any extra soil to build a ring around the periphery of the planting hole to hold water and adjust the soil so that water drains away from the immediate trunk area. Water plants well immediately after planting, and continue watering plants regularly as they take root in their new homes. For the first few months after planting, give plants a deep watering whenever the soil begins to dry out.

## Native Plant Maintenance

Although native plant gardens may require less upkeep than other gardens, they still require some tending. Weed control will be most important to ensure that your garden doesn't become overrun with undesirable plants. Regular watering should not be necessary once plants are established, unless there is an extended drought. It is not necessary to deadhead flowers after they have bloomed, as leaving them will allow them to form seed heads that serve as food for wildlife or a seed source for you to grow more plants. Plants will naturally die back in the fall once cold conditions arrive. Leaving dead plant material in place until spring is beneficial for insects and other wildlife, so there is no need to clean garden beds up before winter.