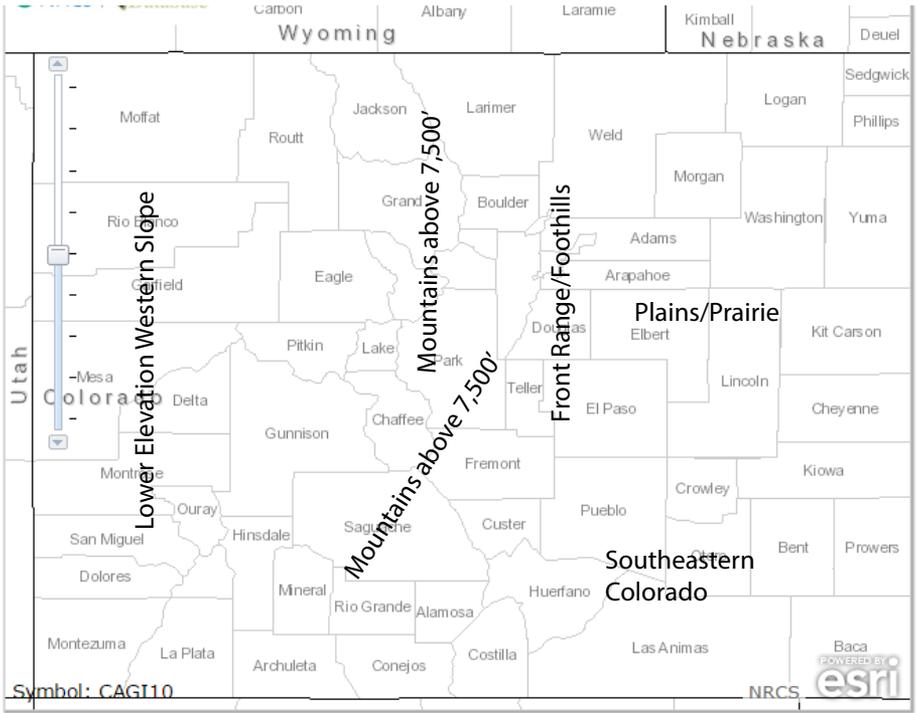


**Low-Water Native Plants for
Colorado Gardens:
*Mountains 7,500' and Above***



Map of Regions



The Colorado native plant gardening guides cover these 5 regions:

- Plains/Prairie
- Front Range/Foothills
- Southeastern Colorado
- Mountains above 7,500 feet
- Lower Elevation Western Slope

This publication was written by the Colorado Native Plant Society Gardening Guide Committee: Committee Chair Irene Shonle, Director, CSU Extension, Gilpin County, Committee Chair; Nick Daniel, Horticulturist, Denver Botanic Gardens; Deryn Davidson, Horticultural Agent, CSU Extension, Boulder County; Susan Crick Smith, President, Front Range Chapter, Wild Ones; Jim Tolstrup, Executive Director, High Plains Environmental Center; Jan Loechell Turner, Co-President, Colorado Native Plant Society; Amy Yarger, Director of Horticulture, Butterfly Pavilion.

Published by the Colorado Native Plant Society, Denver, CO, 2016.

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Front Cover (Silvery Lupine) and **Back Cover** (Prairie Smoke) **Photos**© Jane Hendrix



Irene's Terrace Garden - Wallflowers and Blue Mist Penstemons Photo © Irene Shonle

Introduction

This is one in a series of regional native planting guides that are a collaboration of the Colorado Native Plant Society, CSU Extension, Front Range Wild Ones, the High Plains Environmental Center, Butterfly Pavilion and the Denver Botanic Gardens.

Many people have an interest in landscaping with native plants, and the purpose of this booklet is to help people make the most successful choices. We have divided the state into 5 different regions that reflect different growing conditions and life zones. These are: the plains/prairie, Southeastern Colorado, the Front Range/foothills, the mountains above 7,500', and lower elevation Western Slope. Find the area that most closely resembles your proposed garden site for the best gardening recommendations.

Why Native?

There are many benefits to using Colorado native plants for home and commercial landscapes. They are naturally adapted to Colorado's climates, soils and environmental conditions. This means that by choosing native plants gardeners can work with nature, rather than trying to grow plants that are not suited to our local conditions and may prove to be difficult to work with.

When correctly sited, natives make ideal plants for a sustainable landscape. Native species require less external inputs such as water and fertilizer, and are more resistant to pests and disease when the planting site mimics the plant's native habitat. Outdoor water use accounts for about 55 percent of the residential water use in the Front Range urban area, most of which is used on turf. Planting less-thirsty natives could lessen the burden on our water systems.

Another great reason to go native is to restore habitat. Rapid urbanization in the state is reducing biodiversity (the number of different species found in a given area) as habitat is removed for building and road construction. Research has shown that landscaping with natives on a large or small scale, helps maintain biodiversity that otherwise would be lost to development. Thousands or millions of gardens planted with natives, even in urban areas can provide food, shelter and other important resources for wildlife, including mammals, birds and native pollinators.

Growing native plants does not exclude using adapted non-native plants. There are many non-native plants that are adapted to Colorado's climate and can be used in a native landscape as long as moisture, light and soil requirements are similar. Even if a site has a non-native landscape that requires additional inputs (such as an irrigated landscape on the plains), dry-land native plants can be used in non-irrigated pockets within the non-native landscape. These native "pocket gardens" can be located in areas such as median strips and next to hardscapes that are difficult to irrigate. Note that in years with less than normal rainfall, non-irrigated landscapes may suffer in appearance without supplemental water.

Gardening with native plants also prevents the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. Many noxious weeds were intentionally introduced as garden plants that belatedly were found to escape the confines of the garden and crowd out native plants.

Some communities regulate landscape appearance or the type of plants which may be used. Before initiating any new landscape design, check with local municipalites and/or homeowners' associations to discover any regulations that may affect your design.

Finally, using native plants in landscapes helps provide a special sense of place, celebrating Colorado's uniqueness and beauty, rather than a generic landscape. A garden with native plants feels more harmonious with its surroundings than a landscape transplanted from another locale.

Native Plant Gardening in Colorado's Mountains

The mountain region is characterized by short growing seasons, cool nights, strong sunlight, and high winds. The soils tend to be low in organic matter, and often are formed from decomposed granite. They are usually very well-drained. Precipitation is typically higher in the mountains than in other areas of the state, which can make it easier to establish plants and will reduce water needs. Riparian areas and wetlands support a different suite of plants.

Many mountain areas are covered with dense evergreens (lodgepole, spruce/fir). If nothing is already growing under the dense trees, it is probably

because the trees are outcompeting all other plants. If your goal is to plant herbaceous perennials, you may need to clear trees before planting, in order to reduce competition for light and shade.

Desirable wildlife include numerous butterflies, bumblebees, hummingbirds and songbirds. Deer, elk, moose, pocket gophers, voles, and rabbits are potential problems for gardens.



Betty Ford Alpine Gardens: Prairie Smoke and Redtwig Dogwood Photo by Irene Shonle

Culture and Maintenance

Soils

Colorado mountain soils, on average, are fairly low in organic matter. The good news is that native plants usually can be successfully grown in unamended soils. This is because natives do not require nutrient rich, high organic content soil, and can often become overgrown or short lived in such soils. To amend excessively well-drained sandy or rocky soils, add 3 percent compost by volume. It may be beneficial to test the soil before planting, especially on a larger project. Soil testing kits are available at your local CSU Extension office.

Maintenance

Native plants often do not need much maintenance; just the usual pruning of dead or diseased material, and cutting back perennials in the spring.

Leaving seed heads on the plants in the fall will not only provide a feast for birds, and protect caterpillar eggs and chrysalises, but will increase plant hardiness and winter interest. Native plants typically do not require fertilizer. Some tasks, such as weeding and deadheading, require the same time investment for native plant gardens as for gardens with non-natives.

Watering

Plants will need to be watered for at least the first season, with the most critical time being the first three weeks after planting. Once they are established, water can be cut back gradually. After establishment, some natives can be taken off irrigation completely.

Place plants that have higher water needs nearer the house or other highly used areas. These plants can also be planted in swales (lower areas), or near downspouts for passive water harvesting.

Limiting/reclaiming turf areas

Although grass lawns are popular, they generally use more resources like water, fertilizers, pesticides, and maintenance (mowing) than a landscape of native plants. Lawns also provide no habitat for pollinators and birds. Native landscapes, on the other hand, are less resource intensive, provide habitat and provide more interest and color. Consider either limiting grass lawns to play, pet, or entertaining areas, or replacing lawns altogether if these spaces are not needed.

To reclaim a space formerly devoted to a lawn, spend some time eradicating all grasses and weeds. Grass is easier to kill when it is green and actively growing in the spring or fall. There are a few options for this. One is to use a glyphosate-based herbicide, another is to cut out all the sod, and a third is to solarize the area. Solarization works best in the heat of the summer in full-sun areas. Mow the area and remove the clippings, water, place clear plastic on top (burying the edges with soil) and leave it for 4-6 weeks. A final option is to sheet mulch. Cover the area with sheets of cardboard or 12 layers of newspapers. Overlap these materials at least 6 inches so no light penetrates and wet them down to keep them in place. Place 1 inch of compost on top of the barrier layer. Add at least 6 inches more of mulch or compost (grass clippings, straw or leaves). As these materials break down, they will create a rich humus layer while keeping weeds down. Allow at least 4-6 weeks.

Wildlife/pollinators

Providing habitat for songbirds and pollinators is one of the great pleasures of gardening with native plants. To maximize habitat for pollinators, plant a diversity of plants, and aim to provide the longest possible season of bloom. Many plants will provide nectar for adult insects, but consider the larval

stage in planting too. Most native insects have specialized relationships with native plants, and require specific plants to grow from egg to adult. As an example, many butterflies will sip nectar from non-natives, but the eggs need to be laid on specific plants or the caterpillars won't recognize the plant as food. Purchase pesticide-free plants. There has been recent concern that neonicotinoids are harmful to bees, so look for neonic-free plants.

Birds use native plants for food and shelter, but insects are an overlooked and crucial part of many bird's diets. Far more insects will develop on native plants than exotics, providing food for birds during the critical nesting season. Consider planting a 'thicket' of berry-producing shrubs. If planted in the direction of the prevailing wind, this thicket can also provide a space of calm air for butterflies.

Inventory your yard/microclimates

For the best garden, spend some time in the planning stage. Identify where you would like to create a new bed, or replant an existing one. Inventory the areas in your yard for sun and shade, and for areas where moisture accumulates. Consider what areas have easiest access from the house, and if there are views you would like to enhance or block. All of these factors create what are known as microclimates or small, but potentially significant changes in the immediate environment that will affect your plants. Knowing these ahead of time will help you make the most of your site and can guide your plant choices.

Design for low maintenance

Native plants can be used to accomplish just about any design style you're looking for using the elements and principles of good design: color, texture, balance, unity, variety, rhythm, line, form, scale. They can be used for anything from formal designs to the more informal naturalistic plantings that most people think of when they think native.

Choose species based on the soil, light and water conditions of your site and for the size, shape, texture, and color desired. For a more natural, successful and easily maintained landscape, group species that grow together naturally and have the same cultural requirements. This will improve plant health and appearance and will minimize maintenance.

Southfacing areas with reflected heat, will do best with dryland or desert plants. Northfacing areas are cooler, moister and shadier, and will do better with forest-edge type plants. Westfacing areas are more similar to southfacing, even if they only get a half day of sun, so this is a good spot for dryland, prairie, or chaparral plants. The eastfacing side is usually the most benign, and can grow a wide variety of plants.

Plants that have higher water needs should be placed near the house for easier watering, or near downspouts or in low-lying areas where they will get extra water.

Be sure to be vigilant for weeds, especially in the first few years of planting, so they don't take over the desirable vegetation. Plant thickly enough that the plants become a living mulch.

Suggested Reading

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**Items available from the CoNPS Store at the time this booklet was published are marked with an asterisk. Others may be out-of-print and can be obtained from Amazon or the public library.*

Plant List

The plants for each of this guides were selected by experienced gardeners, with further input from other local gardeners from the Colorado Native Plant Society. For the most part, we chose plants that would be relatively easy to find in nurseries and seed catalogs. The scientific names are from *Flora of Colorado* by Jennifer Ackerfield; synonyms are in parentheses. For a listing of nurseries and seed companies that carry native plants, look for the "Native Plant vendors" list on the Colorado Native Plant Society (CoNPS) website at <http://conps.org/gardening-with-native-plants/> or consider attending the native plant sales held by CoNPS. When you go to a nursery, be sure to have the scientific name with you to make sure you are purchasing the correct species and ask for pesticide-free plants.

Photos in this guide by Irene Shonle, Jane Hendrix, and Jan and Charlie Turner.



Showy Goldeneye (in front of rock), Tansy Aster (*Dieteria bigelovii* syn. *Machaeranthera bigelovii* and *Aster bigelovii*) is behind the rock, Black-eyed Susan. Photo © Irene Shonle

Key

np/bee,btf = nectar and pollen for bees and butterflies

np/bee,btf,o = nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators

s/birds = seeds for birds

ss/birds = seeds and shelter for birds

p/bees = pollen for bees

frt/birds, wl = fruit for birds and wildlife

hp = host plant

hp/hm = host plant for hawk moth

n/hm=nectar for hawkmoths

n/hb = nectar for hummingbirds

wd=well-drained soils

lav = lavender

msu = mid-summer

lsu = late-summer

lsp = late-spring



Colorado Native Plant Society Mission Statement

The Colorado Native Plant Society is dedicated to furthering the knowledge, appreciation and conservation of native plants and habitats of Colorado through education, stewardship and advocacy.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Size H x W
GROUNDCOVERS		
Pussytoes	<i>Antennaria</i> spp.	6" x 18"
Kinnikinnick	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	1' x 2'
Sulfur Buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum umbellatum</i>	10" x 12"
PERENNIALS		
Common Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium (lantana)</i>	18" x 18"
Pearly Everlasting	<i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i>	18" x 18"
Rocky Mountain Columbine	<i>Aquilegia caerulea</i>	24" x 12"
Harebell	<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	8" x 15"
Scott's Sugarbowl	<i>Clematis scottii (hirsutissima var. scottii)</i>	12" x 18"
Rocky Mountain Bee Plant (Annual)	<i>Cleome (Peritoma) serrulata</i>	3-6' x 3-6')
Showy Fleabane	<i>Erigeron speciosus</i>	18" x 12"
Wallflower	<i>Erysimum capitatum</i>	18" x 18"
Blanketflower	<i>Gaillardia aristata</i>	12" x 12"
Richardson's Geranium	<i>Geranium richardsonii</i>	12" x 12"
Sticky Geranium	<i>Geranium viscosissimum</i>	12" x 18"
Prairie Smoke	<i>Geum triflorum</i>	6" x 12"
Sneezeweed	<i>Helenium (Hymenoxys) hoopesii</i>	24" x 18"
Showy Goldeneye	<i>Heliomeris (Viguera) multiflora</i>	48" x 48"
Scarlet Gilia	<i>Ipomopsis aggregata</i>	12" x 12"
Silvery Lupine	<i>Lupinus argenteus</i>	24" x 12"
Bee Balm/Horsemint	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	24" x 24"
Showy Locoweed	<i>Oxytropis lambertii</i>	12" x 12"
Rocky Mountain Penstemon	<i>Penstemon strictus</i>	30" x 24"
Blue Mist Penstemon	<i>Penstemon virens</i>	12" x 12"
Whipple's Penstemon	<i>Penstemon whippleanus</i>	24" x 12"
Silky Phacelia	<i>Phacelia sericea</i>	16" x 12"
Jacob's Ladder	<i>Polemonium viscosissimum</i>	18" x 12"
Pasque Flower	<i>Pulsatilla (Anemone) patens</i>	6" x 6"
Black-eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	24" x 12"
Golden Banner	<i>Thermopsis divaricarpa</i>	18" x 24"
GRASSES		
Indian Ricegrass	<i>Achnatherum (Oryzopsis) hymenoides</i>	24' x 12"
Junegrass	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	18" x 18"

Water	Exposure	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Wildlife Value
low	sun/part shade	cream/pink	sp-msu	np/bee,btf,o
low	sun/ part shade	pink	sp-esu	np/bee, btf ;ftr/birds, wl
low	sun/part shade	yellow	esu	np/bee,btf
low-med	sun	white	su	np/bee,btf,o
low	sun	white	msu	np/bee,btf,o
med	sun/part shade	blue	esu-msu	np/bee,btf; n/hummb
low	sun/part shade	purple	msu-lsu	np/bee
low	sun/part hade	purple	sp-esu	np/bee,btf
low	sun	pale purple	msu-lsu	np/bee,btf;n/hummb
low	sun/part shade	lavender/blue	msu	np/bee,btf,o
low	sun/part shade	yellow/orange	esu	np/bee,btf
med	sun	yellow/red	su-fall	np/bee,btf
med	sun/part shade	white		
med	sun/part shade	pink/rose	su -fall	np/bee,btf,o
med	sun/part shade	cream/pink	esu	np/bee,btf,o
med	sun/part shade	yellow/orange	msu-lsu	np/bee,btf
low	sun	yellow	lsu	np/bee,btf
low	sun/part shade	red/pink	su-fall	n/hummb
low	sun	purple/white	msu	np/bee,btf,o
low-med	sun/part shade	pink/lavender	summer	np/bee,btf;;n/hummb
low	sun	pink	su	np/bee, btf
low	sun/part shade	blue/purple	summer	np/bee,btf;n/hummb
low	sun/part shade	blue/purple	sp-sum	np/bee,btf;n/hummb
low-med	sun/part shade	wine purple	msu	np/bee,btf ;n/hummb
low	sun	purple	esu	np/bee,btf ;n/hummb
med	sun/part shade	blue	msu	np/bee,btf
low	sun	lavender	sp-esu	np/bee
low	sun/ part shade	yellow	su	np/bee, btf ;s/birds
low	sun/part shade	yellow	esu-msu	np/bee,btf
low	sun		msu-lsu	s/birds
low	sun		sp	s/birds

Common Name	Scientific Name	Mature Size
SHRUBS		
Western Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	12' x 6'
Redtwig Dogwood	<i>Cornus sericea</i>	5' x 5'
Mountain Spray	<i>Holodiscus dumosus</i>	7' x 3'
Shrubby Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>	3' x 3'
Chokecherry	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	15' x 8'
Golden Currant	<i>Ribes aureum (Ribes odoratum)</i>	5' x 4'
Wax Currant	<i>Ribes cereum</i>	4' x 3'
Western Wild Rose	<i>Rosa woodsii</i>	3' x 4'
Boulder Raspberry	<i>Rubus (Oreobatus) deliciosus</i>	4' x 4'
TREES		
Colorado Blue Spruce	<i>Picea pungens</i>	45' '15'
Quaking Aspen	<i>Populus tremuloides</i>	60' x 25'

PHOTO GALLERY OF

CSU Extension Gilpin County



Blanketflower, Rocky Mountain Penstemon, Sticky Geranium. Right foreground: Shrubby Cinquefoil. Photo © Irene Shonle

Water	Exposure	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Wildlife Value
low-med	sun/part shade	white	sp	frt/birds
med-high	sun/ part shade	white	esu	np/bee,btf,o
low	part shade	pink/white	msu	np/bee,btf
low	sun	yellow	esu-fall	np/bee,btf,o
low	sun/part shade	white	sp	np/bee,btf; frt/birds,wl
low	sun-part shade	yellow	lsp	np/bee, btf ;frt/birds
low	sun-part shade	pink/white	lsp	np/bee, btf ;frt/birds
low-med	sun-part shade	pink	sp-su	np/bees; frt/birds
low	sun part shade	white	esu	np/bee,btf/ frt/birds
med - high	sun/part shade			seeds/birds,wl
med	sun			shelter/birds

LANDSCAPE DESIGNS

Garden in Blackhawk at 9,300'



Rocky Mountain Bee Plant, Black-Eyed Susan, Blanketflower Photo © Irene Shonle
 Inset: Hummingbird and Rocky Mountain Bee Plant Photo © Charlie Turner

Jane & Klaus Hendrix's Garden in Breckenridge at 10,000'

Photos by Jane Hendrix

Silvery Lupine and Paintbrush (the red *Castilleja miniata* and pale yellow *Castilleja sulphurea*) are plentiful in Klaus's wildflower garden, which is part of Mountain View Experimental Gardens (the Hendrix's personal gardens at home). Cookie, a local fox, enjoys visiting the wildflower garden.



Helpful hint from Jane: "Gardeners who want to employ Colorado native species in their gardens should be made aware that not all native wildflowers are suitable for a garden with defined borders. We have a lot of rhizomatous species that are beautiful in bloom but will run rampant in a confined garden and overrun shorter species with taproots or a non-spreading root system. After finding this out the hard way, I now always test a new species in a "semi-wild" area before deciding whether to place it in one of my rock gardens."



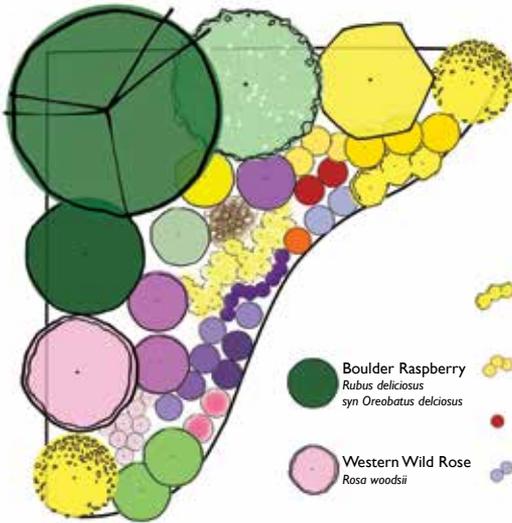
Irene Shonle's Yard in Rollinsville at 8,700'

Photos by Irene Shonle



Clockwise from upper left:
Irene's garden includes Boulder
Raspberry; Sneezeweed
(upper right); Rocky Mountain
Penstemon and Big Sagebrush
(*Artemisia tridentata*
(middle right);
Junegrass and Sneezeweed
(lower left); Geranium and Rocky
Mountain Columbine (middle
left).

Pollinator Paradise for Mountains



 Golden Banner
Thermopsis divaricata

 Black-Eyed Susan
Rudbeckia hirta

 Blanketflower
Gaillardia aristata

 Blue Mist Penstemon
Penstemon virens

 Wallflower
Erysimum capitatum

 Pasque flower
Pulsatilla patens

 Harebell
Campanula rotundifolia

 Prairie Smoke
Geum triflorum

 Showy Fleabane
Erigeron speciosus

 Sulfur Buckwheat
Eriogonum umbellatum

 Boulder Raspberry
Rubus deliciosus
syn. *Oreobatus deliciosus*

 Western Wild Rose
Rosa woodsii

 Silvery Lupine
Lupinus argenteus

 Sneezeweed
Helenium hoopesii
syn. *Hymenoxys hoopesii*

 Pearly Everlasting
Anaphalis margaritacea

 Bee Balm
Monarda fistulosa

 Common Yarrow
Achillea millefolium
(lanatum)

 Showy Goldeneye
Heliomeris multiflora
syn. *Viguiera multiflora*

 Chokecherry
Prunus virginiana syn.
Padus virginiana

 Mountain Spray
Holodiscus dumosus

 Golden Currant
Ribes aureum

 Shrubby Cinquefoil
Potentilla fruticosa syn.
Pentaphylloides floribunda



Golden Currant
Ribes aureum



Shrubby Cinquefoil
Potentilla fruticosa



Mountain Spray
Holodiscus dumosus

Garden design by Irene Shonle.



Chokecherry
Prunus virginiana



Boulder Raspberry
Rubus deliciosus



Wild Rose
Rosa woodsii



Silvery Lupine
Lupinus argenteus



Sneezeweed
Hymenoxys (Helenium) hoopesii



Pearly Everlasting
Anaphalis margaritacea



Beebalm
Monarda fistulosa



Common Yarrow
Achillea millefolium



Showy Goldeneye
Heliomeris multiflora



Golden Banner
Thermopsis divaricarpa



Black-Eyed Susan
Rudbeckia hirta



Blanketflower
Gaillardia aristata



Blue Mist Penstemon
Penstemon virens



Wallflower
Erysimum capitatum



Pasque flower
Pulsatilla patens



Harebell
Campanula rotundifolia



Prairie Smoke
Geum triflorum

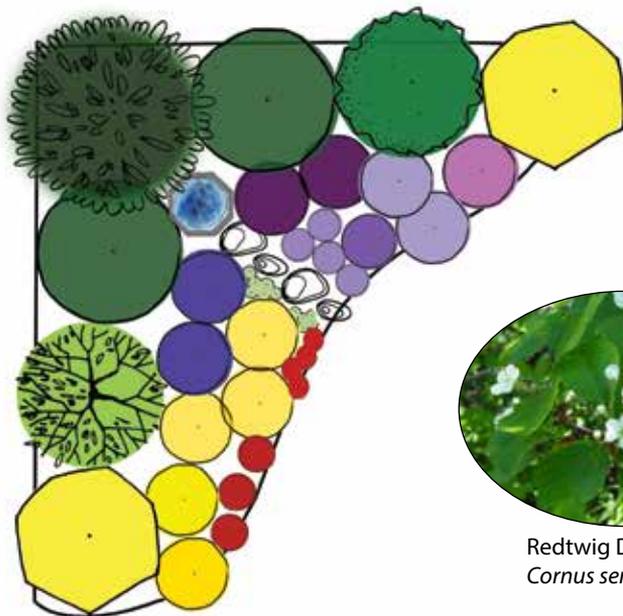


Showy Fleabane
Erigeron speciosus



Sulphur Buckwheat
Eriogonum umbellatum

Songbird/Hummer Haven for Mountains



Redtwig Dogwood
Cornus sericea

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  | Western Serviceberry
<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i> |  | Rocky Mtn Penstemon
<i>Penstemon strictus</i> |  | Sneezeweed
<i>Helenium hoopesii</i> syn. <i>Hymenoxys hoopesii</i> |
|  | Boulder Raspberry
<i>Rubus deliciosus</i> syn. <i>Oreobatus deliciosus</i> |  | Black-Eyed Susan
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i> |  | Blanketflower
<i>Gaillardia aristata</i> |
|  | Redtwig Dogwood
<i>Cornus sericea</i> |  | Whipples Penstemon
<i>Penstemon whippleanus</i> |  | Harebell
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i> |
|  | Wax Currant
<i>Ribes cereum</i> |  | Rocky Mtn Columbine
<i>Aquilegia caerulea</i> |  | Scarlet Gilia
<i>Ipomopsis aggregata</i> |
|  | Golden Currant
<i>Ribes aureum</i> |  | Showy Goldeneye
<i>Heliomeris multiflora</i> syn. <i>Viguera multiflora</i> |  | Pussytoes
<i>Antennaria spp.</i> |
| | |  | Bee Balm
<i>Monarda fistulosa</i> | | |

Garden design by Irene Shonle.



Western Serviceberry
Amelanchier alnifolia



Boulder Raspberry
Rubus deliciosus



Wax Currant
Ribes cereum



Golden Currant
Ribes aureum



Rocky Mountain Penstemon
Penstemon strictus



Black-Eyed Susan
Rudbeckia hirta



Whipples Penstemon
Penstemon whippleanus



Rocky Mountain Columbine
Aquilegia caerulea



Showy Goldeneye
Heliomeris multiflora



Beebalm
Monarda fistulosa



Sneezeweed
Helenium hoopesii



Blanketflower
Gaillardia aristata



Harebell
Campanula rotundifolia



Scarlet Gilia (Biennial)
Ipomopsis aggregata



Pussytoes
Antennaria spp.

**Celebrate Colorado Native Plant Week
June 10 - June 16**



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Published by the Colorado Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 200, Fort Collins, CO 80522
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