

Missouri Native Groundcover Display

Qualities of low maintenance plants:

- Compact, clump-forming—for use in small-scale landscapes
- Spreading plants—for use in large-scale landscapes
- Long lived
- Four season appeal
- Eliminate weeds
- Ability to tolerate a wide range of soil and moisture conditions

Native Missouri groundcovers are showcased in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden in order to give the home landscaper alternatives to the traditional non-native, and often invasive, groundcovers such as wintercreeper, English ivy, periwinkle, and pachysandra. Examples of native groundcovers included in the display are ground-hugging species such as Rose Verbena (*Glandularia canadensis*), which scrambles across the ground, rooting at its nodes and the native strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*) that sends out underground runners, as well as False Rue Anemone (*Isopyrum biternatum*) and Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*), both of which can form large colonies in the right conditions. Native suckering sedges such as *Carex emorii*, *Carex hystricina*, and *Carex praegracilis* will also have an important place in the groundcover garden. Some taller species, not normally thought of as groundcovers, such as Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum commutatum*) and False Solomon's Seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*) will be included, as well. They come in handy when trying to fill large expanses in between shrubs and shorter, edge plants. Also included will be species that are not aggressively spreading, but rather can act as a groundcover by planting en masse, such as Poverty Oats Grass (*Danthonia spicata*) and native Alumroot (*Heuchera* species). The largest of the groundcovers in the display beds are bamboo and a group of dogwood. Giant Cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*), our native bamboo, is an aggressive groundcover that spreads by underground stems. Swamp Dogwood (*Cornus amomum* var. *obliqua*), as well as many other suckering shrub species, can act as important groundcovers, especially when height is needed or when it is necessary to cover large areas.

The groundcover display gardens will constantly be evolving. Traditional native groundcovers will always be the mainstay, but little-known species will be used, as well. If plants are not vigorous enough to be a garden-worthy groundcover, they will be replaced with a different species. Conversely, if they are so aggressive, to the point of being problematic to the home gardener, they will also be replaced. The goal is to provide examples of how native plants can be used for different situation – situations in which non-natives are normally used. Hopefully, you will stop by often to see how the area transforms and, just maybe, come up with some ideas of your own.

Shade:

Grasses & sedges...

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Carex albicans</i> | White-tinged sedge |
| <i>C. grayii</i> | Bur sedge |
| <i>C. jamesii</i> | James' sedge |
| <i>C. muskingumensis</i> | Palm sedge |
| <i>C. pennsylvanica</i> | Pennsylvania sedge |
| <i>C. praegracilis</i> | Tollway/freeway sedge |
| <i>Diarrhena obovatus</i> | Beak grass |
| <i>Chasmanthium latifolia</i> | River oats |

Perennials...

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Chelone obliqua</i> | Rose turtlehead |
| <i>Heuchera americana</i> | American alumroot |
| <i>Iris cristata</i> | Dwarf crested iris |

*Senecio aureus** Golden groundsel
*S. obovatus** Round-leaved groundsel

Ferns...

Onoclea sensibilis Sensitive fern
Matteuchia struthiopteris Ostrich fern

Shrubs...

*Arundinaria gigantea** Giant cane
Corylus americana Hazelnut
Hydrangea arborescens Wild hydrangea
Neviusia alabamense Alabama snow wreath
*Zanthoxylum americanum** Toothache tree

Sun:

Grasses & sedges...

Carex annectans Yellow-fruited fox sedge
*C. buxbaumii** Buxbaum sedge
*C. emorii** Emory's sedge
C. muskingumensis Palm sedge
*C. praeegracilis** Tollway sedge
Panicum virgatum Switchgrass
Schizachyrium scoparium Little bluestem
Sporobolus heterolepis Prairie dropseed
*Spartina pectinata** Cordgrass

Perennials...

Achillea millefolia Yarrow
Amsonia illustris Shining bluestar
*Anemone canadensis** Meadow anemone
Aster oblongifolius Aromatic aster
Chelone obliqua Rose turtlehead
*Fragaria virginica** Wild strawberry
*Helianthus occidentalis** Western sunflower
Heuchera richardsonii Prairie alumroot
Iris virginica Southern blue flag
Iris fulva Copper iris
Parthenium hispidum American feverfew

Shrubs...

*Arundinaria gigantea** Giant cane
Corylus americana Hazelnut
Hydrangea arborescens Wild hydrangea
Ribes odoratum Golden currant
*Rhus copallina** Winged sumac
Salix humilus Prairie willow

*Plants that spread rapidly by rhizomes and develop into large colonies. These species require large areas.