

Melissa Apland
Bee Balm Wildscapes

Native Plants for Shady Spaces

And lessons learned
from my own yard



About Me

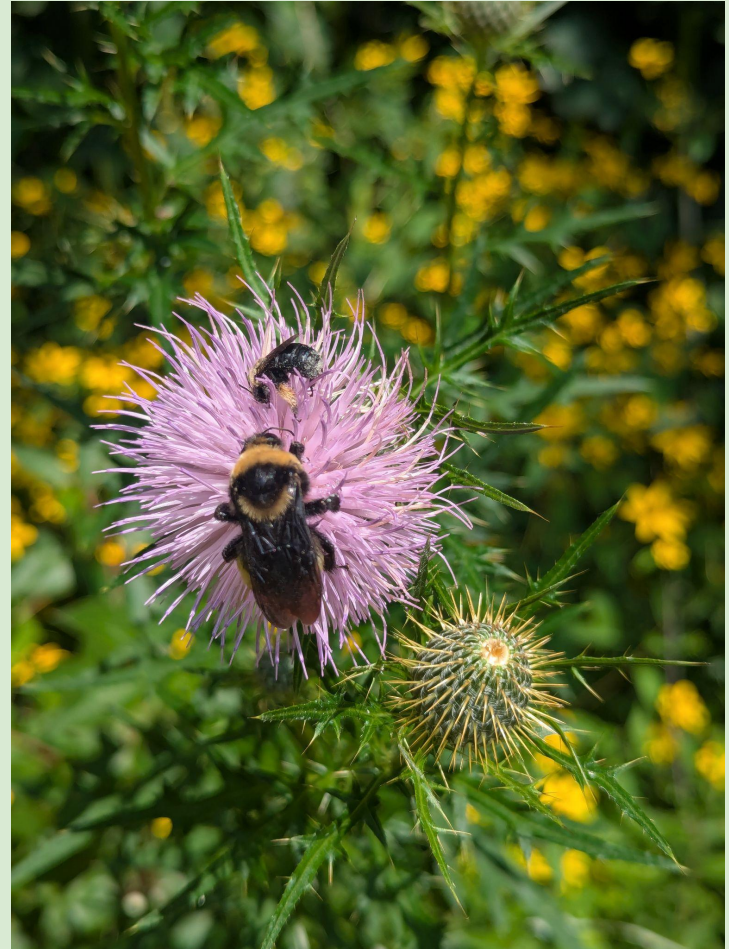


About Me





Bee Balm Wildscapes

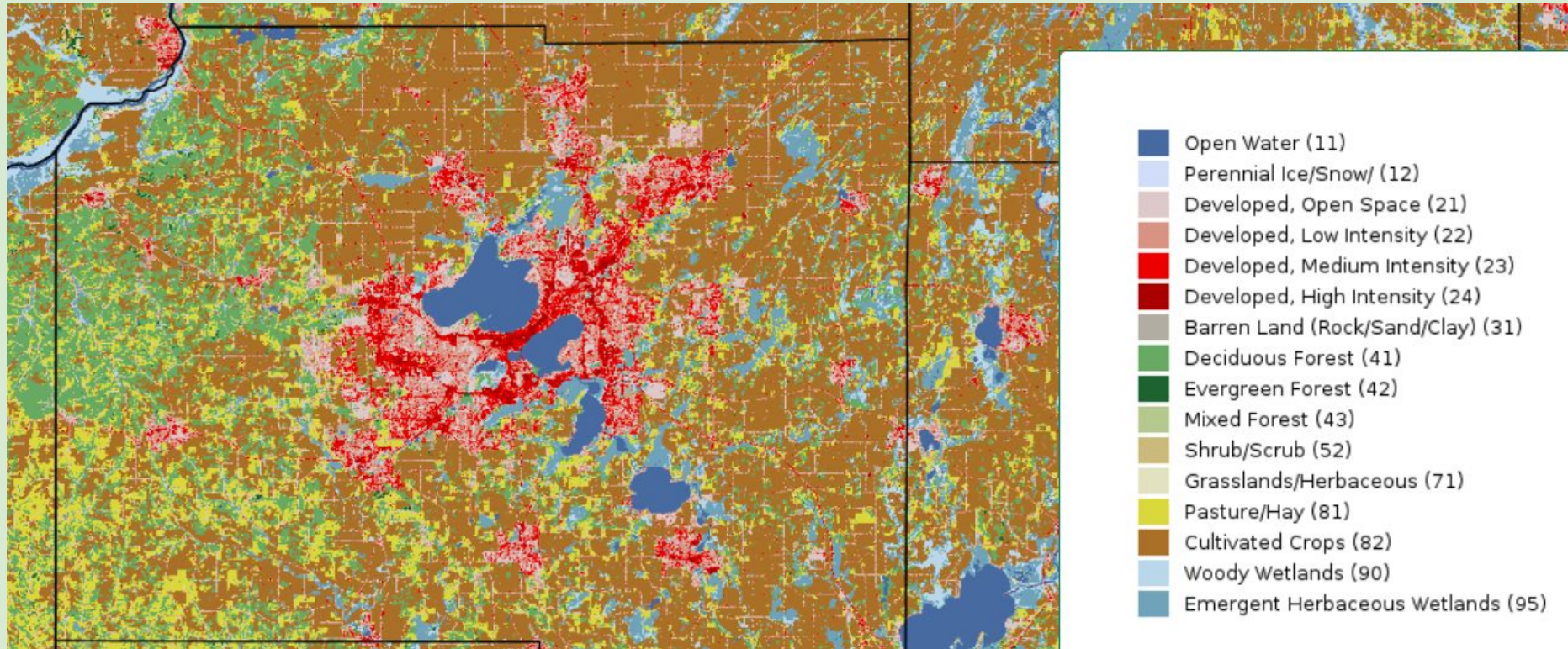




Eacles imperialis
Photo taken by Colin Gillette, accessed via Flickr



Euclea delphinii
Photo taken by Brody J, accessed via Flickr





Shade Garden Positives

Adds life to an often empty space!

Flowers earlier in season than prairie plants

Less weed competition

Fewer plants to choose from = easier choices!

What is a native plant?

A species of plant that was present before European settlement

[Prairiemoon.com](http://prairiemoon.com) source for range maps

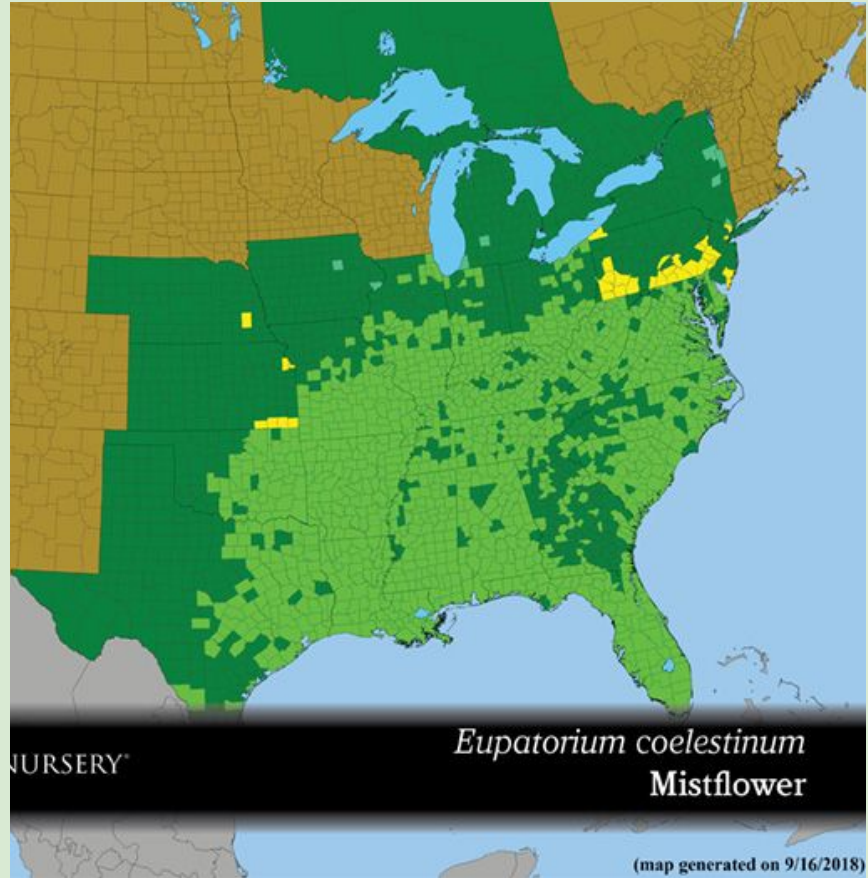
Lessons Learned: Check that it's native!

Even a 'native plant sale' may include non-native plants

Be extra careful at any large nursery!

Trust latin names only - NOT common names

From seed - "wildflower" = NOT NATIVE



Source: Prairie Moon Nursery

Cultivars

A cultivar is a selection of a plant species that changes a characteristic of the plant

Changes to flower, foliage color likely reduce insect use

Changes to flower period, bloom density, overall stature

= likely less effects on insects

May be cultivar of non-native species



Purchased as a “Jacob’s Ladder” cultivar - but this is a cultivar of *Polemonium caeruleum*, not the native *Polemonium reptans*

Yes it is gorgeous, do you want it

Matching Plants to Your Site

Traditional advice: 6+ hours of sun = full sun

4-6 hours = part sun

Under 4 hours = shade

Heliophily ratings from North Carolina Botanical Garden

<https://fsus.ncbg.unc.edu/main.php?pg=index.php>

Also consider soil moisture

How to Structure Planting?

Include trees, shrubs, flowers AND grasses

Background of grasses/sedges

Shorter overall height will look more organized

Spring through fall blooms

Include one aster, goldenrod

How to Choose Native Plants

Pre made kits are a great place to start!

Prairie Moon's website a great resource

“Native Plants of the Midwest” by Alan Branhagen

Local, specialized nurseries can provide
recommendations

Where to get native plants?

You will be best served by a specialist grower

WI DNR maintains list of native plant growers

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/endangeredresources/nativeplants>

Agrecol in Edgerton

Johnson's Nursery in Milwaukee

Bare Root orders

How to organize planting

Plant lots of plants! One per square foot

Spread grasses/sedges throughout

Tall in back/middle, short in front

Choose a 'palette' of species and plant in
clumps of 3/5/7/9









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May 2022:
Planted 24
sedges, 3
species



August 2022



Bee Balm Wildscapes

May 2023



July 2023



July 2024



August 2025



Site Prep: Cardboard & Mulch

Materials easy and cheap or free to source
Cuts down on weed pressure in disturbed site
Not adding chemicals to soil

More labor/time intensive
Prevents plants from reseeding in first few years
Have to plant pre-grown plants

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May 2023



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September 2023



Bee Balm Wildscapes

May 2024



Bee Balm Wildscapes

June 2024



Bee Balm Wildscapes

July 2024



Bee Balm Wildscapes

August 2024



Bee Balm Wildscapes

May 2025



Bee Balm Wildscapes

June 2025



Bee Balm Wildscapes

September 2025



September 2023



October 2023





May 2024



July 2024



August 2024



April 2025



May 2025



Bee Balm Wildscapes

June 2025



Bee Balm Wildscapes

July 2025



September 2025



September 2025... the
next adventure



Site Prep: Herbicide

Easy, cheap, quick, effective

Can seed in to killed grass or plant plugs

May only need one or two applications

Recommend looking for a product with one active ingredient so that you can understand risks

Concerns over environmental toxicity

Growing from Seed Mixes

“Wildflower” is NOT native

May be hard to find native seed mix that meets aesthetic criteria

Slower to establish, but may still get first year flowers



Site Prep: Sod Cutter

Prepares site quickly

I found manual sod cutter easy to use

Can seed in to exposed soil

No chemicals added to soil

Removes organic material

Have to dispose of cut sod

Exposes seed bank & doesn't remove all grass roots

Site Prep: Plastic Sheeting

Not labor intensive

Can seed in to exposed soil

No chemicals added to soil... Maybe

Takes an entire growing season to prep site

Concerns about microplastics

May not work as well in shady sites

Kills soil life

Contact

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