



# NATIVE PLANTS— A Heritage Worth Protecting

*Man has been the great disturber of populations and unwittingly has set in motion forces that he neither understands nor can control...*

—Samuel A. Graham, 1939

## What is a native plant?

Plants that are “native” to Michigan have grown here for thousands of years. Michigan’s native plants have adapted over the centuries as glaciers, rivers, storms, and fire have shaped the landscape. Our native plants evolved together with other plants, animals and fungi, forming complex webs of relationships known as ecosystems.

## What is an invasive plant?

Non-native plants, on the other hand, evolved in other parts of the world. When humans travel, we often carry (both intentionally and unintentionally) plants from other parts of the world. Some of these non-native plants have become invasive, spreading into natural areas. A non-native plant that spreads aggressively and crowds out native plants is called an invasive plant.

## Why are native plants and ecosystems important?

Since native plants co-evolved with our native animals, these plants provide the ideal food and shelter for our native wildlife. Native plants are also especially adapted to our soil and weather conditions; so native plants are perfectly designed to filter water and produce oxygen for our region.

Biodiversity—a variety of living things—keeps ecosystems healthy. A diverse animal community needs a wide variety of plants. When an invasive plant, such as buckthorn, enters an ecosystem it can replace hundreds of native plant species with one monotonous stand of buckthorn.

If we cultivate and protect native plants, we can preserve the precious biodiversity of our state!



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