Designing with Natives

by,

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CERTIFIED WILDLIFE HABITAT

This property provides the four basic habitat elements needed for wildlife reproduction, cover, and places to raise young.
Why Natives?
The Positives!
“Preaching to the Choir”

• Best Adapted to their location – drought tolerant

• Low Maintenance – less pruning, mowing

• Host Plants and Food for Wildlife – Birds, Bees, Butterflies, etc...

• Many are very attractive to purists and non-purists alike

• Sustainable / Green – don’t need chemicals-fertilizers
Designing is like Painting

• You have a palette of Trees, Shrubs and plants to work with

• Natives …… Use a more Limited Palette

• Evergreens in a Temperate Garden provide the structure

• Natives ….Very few native evergreens for our area

• Paintings need lots of color

• Natives sometimes have short lived seasons of color

Bottom Line …. Designing with natives is more challenging!
The Negatives

• Can be Messy Looking

• Blooms are frequently short lived

• Some are Ephemeral

• Eaten - up by Insects and Animals

• Very Specific Cultural Requirements

• Very Few are Evergreen

• Varying Philosophies as to what is truly Native
Too Busy!

Short Lived Color!
Too Barren!
Design by numbers / no plan or design...
Haphazard Planting – SW Natives
Better Design – SW Natives – Scale – Massing – Heirarchy - Textures
The 6 S’s – Design Guideline

• Structure – mostly with conifers / broad leaf evergreens

• Selection – natives for every use (Specimens, Screens, Foundations)

• Simple – One of everything bodes badly for design and wildlife

• Sequencing – Planting to maximize bloom time, texture and shape

• Shrink – plant to eventually shrink down the lawn size

• Sweeps and Swaths – drifts / masses give continuity and abundance
Great Native Design is Difficult to Achieve but Do-able…

1) Less Plants Overall than traditional design to Choose From…

2) Much Less Structural Evergreen Trees and Shrubs for Structure

3) Very little historic precedent available as a guide

4) Drastic differences in plants and style from one region to the next
Color Theory

Hot/ Warm Color (Contracts)

Cold/ Cool (Expands)

Complementary

Borrowed

Monochromatic
Spider Wart and Coreopsis / Blue – Yellow Combo - Summer
Celedine Poppy and Virginia Bluebell  Blue – Yellow Combo / Spring
Borrowed Color
Native Color

Color – Great in Early Spring and in the Fall – Not so much in between

Color in Blooms

Color in Stems

Color in Berries / Fruit

Color in Leaves
Cool Colors
Nice Borrowed View of Evergreens

Warm Colors
Colorful Twigs / Branches
Colorful Foliage
Fall Color
Native Textures

Fine

Medium

Coarse
Informal Design
(Most Popular with Natives!)

• Planting in a naturalistic manner – “mimic nature”

• Preference for grouping or drifts rather than repetition

• Preference for curved or windy shaped areas rather than geometrically defined spaces or straight lines

• Mixture of all manners of plants from evergreen to deciduous
Understory
Woodland
Sunny Seating
Urban Allee
Formal - Semi Formal Design with Natives
( Less common but worth trying!)

• Intentional Use of Symmetry
• Repetition of elements including plants/shrubs/trees
• Rigid geometry created by defines edges
• Intentional creation of a Sense of Enclosure
• Use of Topiary, Espalier and other pruning techniques to create desired shapes or specimens
• Creation of “Vistas” ending in “Focal Points”
• Intentional “Framing of a View” with plants or manmade materials
Non-Native Formality Redo

Substitute Boxwoods with Inkberry Holly

Substitute Leyands with Hemlocks

Substitute Limelights with Annebelles
Hydrangea arborescens

Hydrangea arborescens “Annebelle”
Substitute Astilbe with Christmas Fern
Foundation Plantings
Replace Lawn with Native Groundcovers or a Meadow
Regionalism important – Native Palms in TN?
Soothing All-Green
Massing of Color .... New American Garden.... Oehme van Sweden
Environment around a Focal Point
Native Stone with Native Plants
Spring Blooming Borders edged with Natives
Summer Blooming Border with Rudbekia
Native Grass
Oriented
Landscape Design
3 Elements (Trees, Native Grass & Alliums)
2 Elements  (Native Switch Grass & Sod)
4 Elements  (Native Switch Grass , Sod, River Birches & Iron Retaining Walls)
Substitute Mums with Asters, Miscanthus with Native Grasses
New Urban & Modern Style
With
Natives...
Boston Area     New Urban Meadow     Medians
Roof Gardens Using Low Growing Native Groundcovers
Xeriscaping  South Western Natives  Low Growing Cacti and Grasses
Urban Courtyards Using Sweetbay Magnolia and Virginia Creeper
New York City    The High Line utilizing many native plants!
Soften Concrete and Brick      Very Heat Tolerant
Compliments the Modern Architectural Aesthetic
Simple Substitutes

Mums - Asters

Foster Holley - Ilex opaca (American Holly) or Ilex vomitoria (Youpon)

Leyland Cypress – Eastern Hemlock, or Cherry Laurel

“Limelight” Hydrangeas - “Annebelle” or Oakleaf Hydrangeas

Tall Sedums - Joe Pye Weeds

Miscanthus Grass – Pink Muhly or Switch Grass

Kousa Dogwoods – American Dogwood or Redbuds

Astilbe – Foam Flowers, Black Cohosh

Asian Wisteria – Am. Wisteria, Scarlet Honeysuckle, Cross- Trumpet vine

Boxwood – Inkberry Holly
Some Drought Tolerant Natives...
Long Leaf Pine – Pinus palustris
Pink Muhly Grass – Mhlenbergia capillaris
American Beautyberry – Callicarpa americana
Trumpet Honeysuckle - Lonicera sempervirens
Spider Wart – Tradescantia virginiana
Black Eye Susan – Rudbekia hirta
Threadleaf Coreopsis – Coreopsis verticillata
Indian Blanket – Gaillardia pulchella
Some Great Natives for Wildlife
Serviceberry – Amelancier laevis or hybrids / Food for birds
American Elderberry – Sambucus canadensis
Mountain Ash / Rowan – Sorbus americana
“Butterfly Weed – Milkweed” – Asclepias tuberosa

“Common Milkweed” – Asclepias syriaca
Echinacea purpurea or hybrids – Purple Coneflower

Rudbekia hybrids
The End!