

LANDSCAPING ALTERNATIVES

FOR COMMON INVASIVE
WETLAND AND AQUATIC PLANTS



Amy Kowalski



Why Alternatives?

Aquatic and wetland plants are great additions to your water gardens, ponds, and rain gardens to oxygenate the water, shelter and feed wildlife, provide beauty, and support pollinators. The plants we choose for rain gardens are also key to how it will function to reduce runoff. Over time, we have learned that many invasive plants introduced to our gardens impact native species by spreading into natural areas. This publication suggests these alternatives because they:

- **Share desired ornamental and environmental features.**
- **Grow in the Upper Midwest successfully.**
- **Are available from nurseries and garden centers.**
- **Will unlikely escape from cultivation or cause harm.**

Robert Korth



A beautiful garden and yard for a healthy environment

Gardeners have many goals in mind when they choose their plants: beauty, structure and design, water quality, attracting birds, and more. Some plants used in backyard ponds and rain gardens are considered aquatic invasive species (AIS). AIS can outcompete native plants, fish, and animals for food, shelter, or habitat if they spread into natural lakes and rivers. AIS can interfere with fishing, swimming, and boating. They cost millions of dollars annually to manage and millions more in lost revenue for businesses, natural resources, and recreation. By choosing wisely for our landscapes, we reduce the risk of these species causing harm.

What are invasive plants?

Invasive plants are non-native plants that cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Midwest states have somewhat different regulations regarding invasive species. For more information on invasive species and regulations in your state, check with your state's natural resources agency.



Why use native plants?

Although we can safely have many non-native plants in our gardens, native plants which evolved with the area's birds, insects, and other wildlife will provide the best shelter and food. You can make your garden an ecological oasis for them. Native plants can be just as attractive, and are likely hardier, than non-native plants.

Sources for native plants, as well as cultivars of those plants, include garden centers, specialty growers, and landscapers. Many states have growers that specialize in their native plants as well as seeds. Be careful of sources found online. Although selling plants to people in states where they are listed as invasive is usually illegal without permits, some sellers operate without knowing or without being concerned about the laws.

Visit Wisconsin DNR at dnr.wi.gov and search:

- Wisconsin Native Plant Nurseries
- Wisconsin Restoration Contractors

Visit Minnesota DNR at dnr.state.mn.us and search:

- Native plant suppliers, landscapers, and restoration consultants



Melinda Meyers

Tips for invasive-free gardens

- There are many books and online resources (see back panel) that can help you find safe, non-regulated plants that can fill the same functions of color and structure for your garden.
- Avoid plants described as “spreads easily” or “fills in quickly.”
- Never dump yard waste into natural waters or landscapes. Options for disposal can vary by state and locality. In Wisconsin, put invasive plants into garbage bags and label them “Invasive-Approved for Landfill by WDNR.” In Minnesota, search “noxious weed disposal” on the Department of Agriculture’s website.
- Home composting may not destroy all reproductive parts. Monitor areas where compost is spread for unintended plant growth.
- Check purchases for unexpected hitchhikers such as snails, crayfish, plant fragments, seeds, etc.
- Please don’t share plants. Sharing plants with friends and family has resulted in the accidental spread of many hidden invasive species, including jumping worms (*Amyntas* species).
- Collecting wild plants is often illegal and risks damaging native habitat.

Think you’ve found a new invasive species or are having trouble with one on your property?

Check your DNR invasive species pages for identification, status, and how to report.









Jeanne Scherer








Low-Risk and Native Species Suggestions for Replacing Invasives






Alternatives to Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*):

| | Floating plants | | Emergent plants | | | |
|------------|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| | White Water Lily (<i>Nymphaea odorata</i>) | Water Poppy (<i>Hydrocleys nymphoides</i>) | Blue Flag Iris (<i>Iris versicolor</i>) | Pickerelweed (<i>Pontederia cordata</i>) | Broad-leaf Arrowhead (<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>) | Hard Stem Bulrush (<i>Schoenoplectus acutus</i>) |
| Light | full sun | part to full sun | full sun to part shade | part to full sun | full sun | full sun |
| Blooms | June-August | June - August | May - June | June-August | June-August | May-July |
| Zone | 4-11 | 9-11 | 3-9 | 3-10 | 5-10 | 3-7 |
| Height | 1-5 feet down in water | 0.5-1 foot | 3-4 feet | 2-4 feet | 1-4 feet | 2-5 feet |
| Spreads by | rhizome | seed and floating stems which produce roots | seed and rhizome | seed and rhizome | seed and rhizome | rhizome |






Alternatives to Non-native Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*):

| | Wetland grasses and grass-like plants | | | | |
|---------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| |  |  |  |  |  |
| | Fox Sedge (<i>Carex vulpinoidea</i>) | Soft Rush (<i>Juncus effusus</i>) | Dark-Green Bulrush (<i>Scirpus atrovirens</i>) | Virginia Wild Rye Grass (<i>Elymus virginicus</i>) | Bottlebrush Sedge (<i>Carex comosa</i>) |
| Soil moisture | wet | wet | medium to wet | medium | medium to wet |
| Light | part to full sun | full sun | part to full sun | part to full sun | part to full sun |
| Blooms | June - July | June - July | July - August | July - September | May - June |
| Growing Zone | 3-9 | 4-9 | 3-8 | 3-9 | 3-8 |
| Height | 4-6 feet | 2-3 feet | 3-5 feet | up to 4 feet | 1-3 feet |
| Spreads by | seed | seed and rhizome | rhizome | tillering and seed | rhizome |







Alternatives to Dame's Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*):

| | Shady area plants | | | | |
|---------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| |  |  |  |  |  |
| | Eastern Bluebells (<i>Mertensia virginica</i>) | Woodland Blue Phlox (<i>Phlox divaricata</i>) | Columbine (<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>) | Bog Bean (<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>) | Cardinal Flower (<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>) |
| Soil moisture | moist | moist | moist to dry | wet | moist |
| Light | part to full shade | part to full shade | part shade | part shade to full sun | part to full sun |
| Blooms | April - May | May - June | May - June | May | July - September |
| Growing Zone | 3-9 | 3-8 | 3-8 | 3-10 | 4-8 |
| Height | 1.5-2 feet | 0.75-1 foot | 1-2 feet | 0.75-1 foot | 2-4 feet |
| Spreads by | seed | root system | seed | rhizome | seed |

Alternatives to Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*):

| | Short and medium height plants | | | | |
|---------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| |  |  |  |  |  |
| | Marsh Marigold (<i>Caltha palustris</i>) | Grass-leaved Goldenrod (<i>Euthamia graminifolia</i>) | Golden Alexanders (<i>Zizia aurea</i>) | Meadow Anemone (<i>Anemone canadensis</i>) | Turtlehead (<i>Chelone glabra</i>) |
| Soil moisture | wet | moist to wet | moist to wet | medium to moist | moist to wet |
| Light | part shade to full sun | full sun to part shade | part shade to full sun | part shade to full sun | full sun to part shade |
| Blooms | April - June | August - October | May - June | April - June | July-September |
| Growing Zone | 3-8 | 3-9 | 3-8 | 3-6 | 3-8 |
| Height | 1-1.5 feet | 3-5 feet | 1.5-3 feet | 1-2 feet | 2-3 feet |
| Spreads by | seed or divide rhizome | seed and rhizome | seed | rhizome | rhizome |

Alternatives to Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*):

| | Tall and showy plants | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| | Joe Pye Weed (<i>Eutrochium maculatum</i>) | Great Blue Lobelia (<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>) | Ladybells (<i>Campanulaceae</i>) | Swamp/Red Milkweed (<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>) | Blue Vervain (<i>Verbena hastata</i>) | Marsh Blazing Star (<i>Liatris spicata</i>) |
| Soil moisture | moist to wet | moist | medium | medium to wet | medium to moist | medium |
| Light | full sun to light shade | part shade to full sun | full to part shade | full sun | full sun | full sun |
| Blooms | June - August | July - October | June - September | June - August | July - September | August - September |
| Zone | 3-8 | 3-9 | 3-8 | 3-9 | 3-8 | 3-8 |
| Height | 4-6 feet | 1-4 feet | 1.5-3 feet | 4 feet | 3-6 feet | 2-4 feet |
| Spreads by | seed | seed | rhizome (can be invasive in moist soils) | seed | seed and rhizome | seed |

ALTERNATIVES

For more information

In Wisconsin

- dnr.wi.gov and search keyword “invasives”
- Report invasive species - email to Invasive.species@Wisconsin.gov

In Minnesota

- www.mndnr.gov/invasives
- Trade pathways: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/trade-pathways.html>

Additional Resources

Visit healthylakeswi.com under *Best Practices* “350ft2 Native Plantings” and find:

- Technical Guidance (Native Planting Companion)
- Guide to Native Plants (a.k.a. Local Beings)

Missouri Botanical Garden Plant Finder

www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfinder/plantfindersearch.aspx

Minnesota Native Plant Guide

www.dnr.state.mn.us/rys/pg/index.html



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



Extension Lakes

College of Natural Resources

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point



An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requirements.