

NATIVE PERENNIALS AND SHRUBS

'TOP TEN' PERENNIALS: EASY TO FIND – EASY TO GROW

(plants usually found in nurseries)

Common name	Latin name	Flower colour	Blooms (approx.)	Sun exposure
Perennials up to 1 m				
Butterfly milkweed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Orange	June-Aug	Full/partial
Hairy Beardtongue	<i>Penstemon hirsutus</i>	Purple	June-July	Full/partial
Blue Lobelia	<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>	Blue	July-Oct	Full/partial
Black-eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Yellow	July-Oct	Full/partial
Foamflower	<i>Tiarella cordifolia</i>	White	May-July	Shade/partial
Perennials taller than 1 m				
Swamp Milkweed	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	Pink	June-Oct	Full/partial
Dense Blazing Star	<i>Liatris spicata</i>	Pink-purple	July-Sept	Full/partial
Spotted Joe Pye	<i>Eutrochium maculatum</i>	Pink	July-Sept	Full/partial
Wild Bergamot	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Pale purple	July-Sept	Full/partial
White Turtlehead	<i>Chelone glabra</i>	White	July-Sept	Full
Some other plants to try, often available at nurseries				
Canada anemone	<i>Anemone canadensis</i>	White	May-June	Full sun to shade
Bunchberry	<i>Cornus canadensis</i>	White	June	Shade/partial
Round-lobed Hepatica	<i>Hepatica americana</i>	White-pink-blue	April-May	Shade/partial
White Snakeroot	<i>Ageratina altissima</i>	White	July-Oct	Partial sun/shade
Some other plants to try, often available at nurseries				
Common Boneset	<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i>	White	July-Sept	Full/partial
Blue flag iris	<i>Iris versicolor</i>	Blue-Purple	May-July	Full/partial
Cardinal Flower	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	Red	July-Sept	Full/partial
Red Columbine	<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>	Red	May-June	Full sun to shade

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OTHER INTERESTING NATIVE PERENNIALS, not usually found in nurseries but good in the garden.
Purchase from native plant sales, or grow from seed or cutting

Perennials up to 1 m				
Common name	Latin name	Flower colour	Blooms (approx.)	Sun exposure
Violets, several species	<i>Viola sp.</i>	White, blue, white, yellow	Spring through summer	Full sun to shade
Wild strawberry	<i>Fragaria virginiana</i>	White	April-June	Full sun to partial shade
Pearly Everlasting	<i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i>	White	June-Sept	Full/partial
Northern Water Horehound	<i>Lycopus americanus</i>	White	July-Sept	Full/partial
False Solomon's Seal	<i>Maianthemum racemosum</i>	White	July	Shade/partial
White goldenrod	<i>Solidago bicolor</i>	White	Aug-Sept	Full
Whorled wood aster	<i>Oclemena acuminata</i>	White	Aug-Sept	Shade
Pale-spiked lobelia	<i>Lobelia spicata</i>	Pale purple	May-Aug	Full/partial
Large-leaved aster	<i>Eurybia macrophylla</i>	Purple	July-Sept	Partial sun/partial shade
Purple avens (Water Avens)	<i>Geum rivale</i>	Pink	June	Partial shade
Blue-eyed grass	<i>Sisyrinchium montanum</i>	Blue	June-July	Full
Golden alexander	<i>Zizia aurea</i>	Yellow	May-June	Full/partial
Grey -stemmed (Field) goldenrod	<i>Solidago nemoralis</i>	Yellow	Aug-Oct	Full
Large-leaved goldenrod	<i>Solidago macrophylla</i>	Yellow	Aug-Sept	Shade/partial
Zigzag goldenrod	<i>Solidago flexicaulis</i>	Yellow	Aug-Sept	Shade/partial
Perennials taller than 1 m				
Cut-leaved coneflower	<i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i>	Yellow	July-Sept	Full
Giant sunflower	<i>Helianthus giganteus</i>	Yellow	July-Sept	Full
Rough Stemmed goldenrod	<i>Solidago rugosa</i>	Yellow	Aug-Sept	Full
Canada or Giant goldenrod	<i>Solidago canadensis, Solidago gigantea</i>	Yellow	Aug-Sept	Full
Seaside goldenrod	<i>Solidago sempervirens</i>	Yellow	July-Sept	Full
Flat-topped white aster	<i>Doellingeria umbellata</i>	White	Aug-Sept	Full/partial
Blue vervain	<i>Verbena hastata</i>	Blue-purple	Aug-Sept	Full to partial shade

NATIVE SHRUBS: GARDEN FAVOURITES

These are all native to the Acadia Forest Region and are usually available at local nurseries although often only available as cultivars **. Not normally grown for their flowers but their berries are a valuable food source for birds and some are edible for humans.

Note: Most native shrubs are very adaptable, thriving in a range of light conditions from sun to partial shade.

Ten shrubs for the small to medium sized garden			
Common Name	Latin name	Flower colour	Blooms (approx)
Highbush Blueberry	<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>	White, bell-like; edible berries	May-June
Shrub Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier sp.</i> (several species)	White; edible berries	May-June
Shrubby cinquefoil	<i>Dasiphora fruticosa</i>	Yellow	June-August
Common Buttonbush	<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	White, becoming red nuts, may remain all winter	July-August
Highbush cranberry	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	White, flat topped cluster; edible berries	June-July
Northern Wild Raisin	<i>Viburnum cassinoides</i>	White, flattish topped cluster; edible berries	June-July
Red Osier Dogwood	<i>Cornus stolonifera</i>	White, flat topped cluster.	June
Black Chokeberry	<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	White; edible berries	June
Inkberry	<i>Ilex glabra</i>	White	July
Sweet pepperbush	<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	White, conical spire	Aug-Oct
Ten shrubs suitable for larger gardens			
Willow, several species	<i>Salix sp.</i> (about a dozen species in NS)	Catkins	April-June
Hawthorn, several species	<i>Crataegus sp.</i> (about a dozen species in NS)	White to pinkish	May-June
Pin Cherry	<i>Prunus pennsylvanica</i>	White clusters; berries make good jam.	May-June
Choke Cherry	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	White, conical cluster; berries make good jam	May-June
Northern Bayberry	<i>Morella pensylvanica</i>	Not showy, leaves fragrant, catkins, hard blue berries	June
Staghorn Sumac	<i>Rhus typhina</i>	Red and fuzzy, may remain through winter	June-July
Showy Mountain Ash or American Mountain Ash	<i>Sorbus decora</i> , or <i>Sorbus americana</i>	White, flat-topped cluster	June-July
Alternate-leaved dogwood	<i>Cornus alternifolia</i>	White, flat-topped cluster	June-July
Common Winterberry	<i>Ilex verticillata</i>	White	July
Common Elderberry	<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	White, flat-topped; black berries edible when cooked, or made into wine	July-Aug

Some low shrubs, suitable for groundcover			
Sweet Fern	<i>Comptonia peregrina</i>	Male catkins, female small reddish burs	May
Common bearberry	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	White-pink bells	May-June
Lowbush blueberry	<i>Vaccinium angustifolium</i>	White bells; edible berries	May-June
Bunchberry	<i>Cornus canadensis</i>	White	June
Large cranberry	<i>Vaccinium macrocarpon</i>	Pink flowers; edible berries	July

The following shrubs are not usually sold at nurseries though Baldwin's Nursery does offer some of these.

Low growing, up to 1 m, suitable for groundcover			
Common Name	Latin name	Flower colour	Blooms (approx)
Crowberry	<i>Empetrium spp.</i> , (5 species)	Tiny, red-purple	April-May
Leatherleaf	<i>Chamaedaphne calyculata</i>	White bells	May-June
Bog laurel	<i>Kalmia polifolia</i>	Pink	June
Labrador tea	<i>Rhododendron groenlandicum</i>	White	June
Partridgeberry	<i>Mitchella repens</i>	White	July
Wintergreen, Eastern teaberry	<i>Gaultheria procumbens</i>	White bell	July-Aug
Taller shrubs, over 1 m			
Hobblebush	<i>Viburnum lantanoides</i>	White, flat topped cluster	May-June
Rhodora	<i>Rhododendron canadense</i>	Pink	May-June
Sheep laurel (Lambkill)	<i>Kalmia augustifolia</i>	Pink	June
Bush honeysuckle	<i>Diervilla lonicera</i>	Yellow	June-July
Native roses, common are: Carolina, Shining, Smooth, Swamp, Virginia	<i>Rosa spp</i>	Pink	July
White meadowsweet	<i>Spiraea latifolia</i>	White	July-Aug
Steeplebush	<i>Spiraea tomentosa</i>	Pink, pyramidal cluster	Aug-Sept
American witch hazel	<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>	Yellow	Sept-Nov

**A cultivar is a native species that has been modified through cross-breeding for desired traits. Studies suggest that pollinators will choose natives over cultivars. This may matter more with perennials where the focus on flower enhancement might inhibit or block access to the centre for nectar.

1. SOME DROUGHT TOLERANT NATIVE PLANTS FOR NOVA SCOTIA GARDENS

Nova Scotia gardeners will not forget the summer of 2025 – the summer of the severe agricultural drought. Many garden plants did not survive the ongoing dry weather. Plants considered *drought tolerant* are those that can withstand some periods of dry weather, not to be confused with *drought resistant* plants that have evolved to survive extended periods of dry weather (think cactus, or Mediterranean plants such as lavender).

The first list below contains some common native plants that can tolerate dry conditions. Those marked with * are not necessarily native to Nova Scotia but are native to north-eastern North America. Those marked with # are not readily available at nurseries or plant sales so should be grown from seed or cuttings. (BNS offers workshops on seed collection and growing from seed, check the website for details). Note: plants will need watered in their first season to get established.

While planning your drought tolerant garden, a tip is to consider the placement of native plants carefully. For example, those that might need a little more watering should be placed nearer to your hose, and plants that require less water make good edging plants (often the driest part of the garden bed).

PERENNIALS

Common Name	Latin name	Sun requirements
Canada/Red Columbine	<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>	Shade
Lance-leaved Coreopsis*	<i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>	Full sun
Hairy Beardtongue	<i>Penstemon hirsutus</i>	Full sun
Dense Blazing Star	<i>Liatris spicata</i>	Full sun
Wild Bergamot/Beebalm	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Part sun-shade
Black-eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Sun-part shade
Butterfly Milkweed*	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Full sun
Pearly Everlasting	<i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i>	Full sun
Evening Primrose	<i>Oenothera biennis</i>	Full sun
Yellow Trout Lilies	<i>Erythronium americanum</i>	Part sun-shade
Arrow Leafed Violet#	<i>Viola saggitata</i>	Sun
Small White Violet#	<i>Viola macloskeyi</i>	Sun
Virginia Mountain Mint*	<i>Pycnanthemum virginianum</i>	Sun
Annual Fleabane#	<i>Erigeron annus</i>	Full sun
Rough Fleabane#	<i>Erigeron strigosus</i>	Full sun
Wild strawberries #	<i>Fragaria virginiana</i>	Full sun
Blue-eyed grass	<i>Sisyrinchium montanum</i>	Sun-part shade
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Sun
Fireweed #	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Sun
Common harebell	<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Sun
Silverrod#	<i>Solidago bicolor</i>	Sun
Gray-stemmed Goldenrod#	<i>Solidago nemoralis</i>	Sun-part shade
Downy Goldenrod#	<i>Solidago puberula</i>	Sun-part shade

Seaside Goldenrod #	<i>Solidago sempervirens</i>	Sun
Heart-leaved Aster#	<i>Symphyotrichum cordifolium</i>	Shade
Calico Aster#	<i>Symphyotrichum lateriflorum</i>	Sun
Smooth Blue Aster#	<i>Symphyotrichum laeve</i>	Part sun-part shade
New England Aster#	<i>Symphyotrichum nova angliae</i>	Full sun
New York Aster#	<i>Symphyotrichum novi-belgii</i>	Full sun

SHRUBS

Staghorn Sumac	<i>Rhus typhina</i>
New Jersey Tea	<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>
Sweet-fern	<i>Comptonia peregrina</i>
Bayberry	<i>Morella pensylvanica</i>
Shrubby Cinquefoil	<i>Dasiphora fruticosa (formerly potentilla)</i>
Virginia Rose	<i>Rosa virginiana</i>
Carolina Rose	<i>Rosa carolina</i>

GROUNDCOVER

Bearberry	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>
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FERNS

Christmas Fern	<i>Polystichum acrostichoides (dry shade)</i>
Rock Polypody	<i>Polypodium virginianum</i>
Lady Fern	<i>Athyrium filix-(can adapt to dry shade)</i>
Hay-scented Fern	<i>Dennstaedtia punctilobula</i>

2. SOME DROUGHT TOLERANT NON-NATIVE PLANTS

This list contains non-native annuals and perennials that are drought tolerant. While we strongly recommend plants from Eastern North America, we recognise some gardeners would like the “instant” colour that non-native annuals and perennials can provide. Most of these are available at local nurseries. Keep in mind though that native plants have a higher nutritional value for our pollinators.

Non-native annuals	Non-native perennials
Zinnias	Coneflowers (<i>Echinacea sp.</i>)
Cosmos	Yarrows
Gazania (African Daisy)	Lavender
French Marigolds	Salvia

Calendula	Bluebeards
Bidens	Russian Sage
Lantana	Sedums and other succulents
Blanket Flower	Catmints
Verbena	Creeping thyme
Phlox	
Petunias	
Sunflowers	

MORE RESOURCES

Although written for Ontario, this is useful information from the Guelph group, “Healthy Landscapes” including a extensive list of drought tolerant plants:

<https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/droughtTolerant-NativePlants.pdf>

This article on native drought tolerant plants is from the Toronto Master Gardeners and includes a list of further references:

<https://www.torontomastergardeners.ca/gardeningguides/drought-tolerant-perennials-a-toronto-master-gardeners-guide/>