



Native Plant Ambassador Q & A

What is the role of a native plant ambassador?

A native plant ambassador is someone who increases awareness of the benefits native plants have on our environment and advocates for getting more native plants in the ground.

Where does advocacy begin?

Advocacy can begin with speaking to family, friends, and neighbors. However, it can reach beyond those in your inner circle. This could include teachers, librarians, business owners, park district directors, school principals, local trustees, school board members, HOA members, etc., whom you interact with on a regular basis. These individuals may be responsible for lands that could become pollinator habitats.

How does an ambassador start a conversation about native plants?

Perhaps you enjoy gardening or the beauty of flowers. Maybe watching birds, bees, and hummingbirds is relaxing for you. Possibly you are saddened to hear the monarch butterfly is on the verge of extinction or that today there are 2.9 billion less birds than there were in 1970. Chances are, those around you care about these things as well and would be a perfect conversation starter to the benefits of native plants. Conversations can also be started by posting information on native plants to your social media accounts.

What is a native plant?

According to the USDA, a native plant is one that is a part of the balance of nature that has developed over hundreds or thousands of years in a particular region. Native plant communities are a vital part of the local ecosystem which is a geographic area where plants, animals and other organisms, as well as weather and landscapes interconnect. In contrast, a non-native plant is one that has been introduced with human help (intentionally or accidentally) to a new place or new type of habitat where it was not previously found.

What are the benefits of native plants?

Native plants provide nectar for pollinators including hummingbirds, native bees, butterflies, moths, and bats. The native nuts, seeds, and fruits produced by these plants offer essential foods for all forms of wildlife. They provide beauty, while requiring little to no maintenance (or watering) once established. Their long roots can assist with drainage issues. Native plants also are perennial and come back year after year. They also help clean our air and water.

Does someone need to plant a huge pollinator garden to make a difference?

"Restoring our environment one plant at a time" is our motto. We believe one plant can make a difference. If a large group of people each plant a small number of native plantings, we can increase our pollinator pockets throughout the southwest and near-west suburbs. Container plantings can also make a difference.

Where can I find information on specific native plants?

You can find native flowering plants, trees, shrubs, and vines that work well in a suburban landscape by using Sag Moraine's online Native Plant Selector tool (sagmoraine.org/plant-selector). Your search can be refined by using various search criteria (sun, moisture, plant height/color). This list excludes large, prairie-type plants.

Where can I find information on native plants in general?

Everything you need to equip you with the knowledge you need can be found at www.sagmoraine.org. Sag Moraine also gives three presentations regularly: *Restoring Our Environment One Plant at a Time*, *Native Plants for a Suburban Landscape*, and *Attracting Monarchs in Your Yard*. Please let us know if you would be interested in joining us for any of those seminars. Excellent books to read to learn more about the effects native plants have on environment are *Nature's Best Hope* and *Bringing Nature Home* by Doug Tallamy.