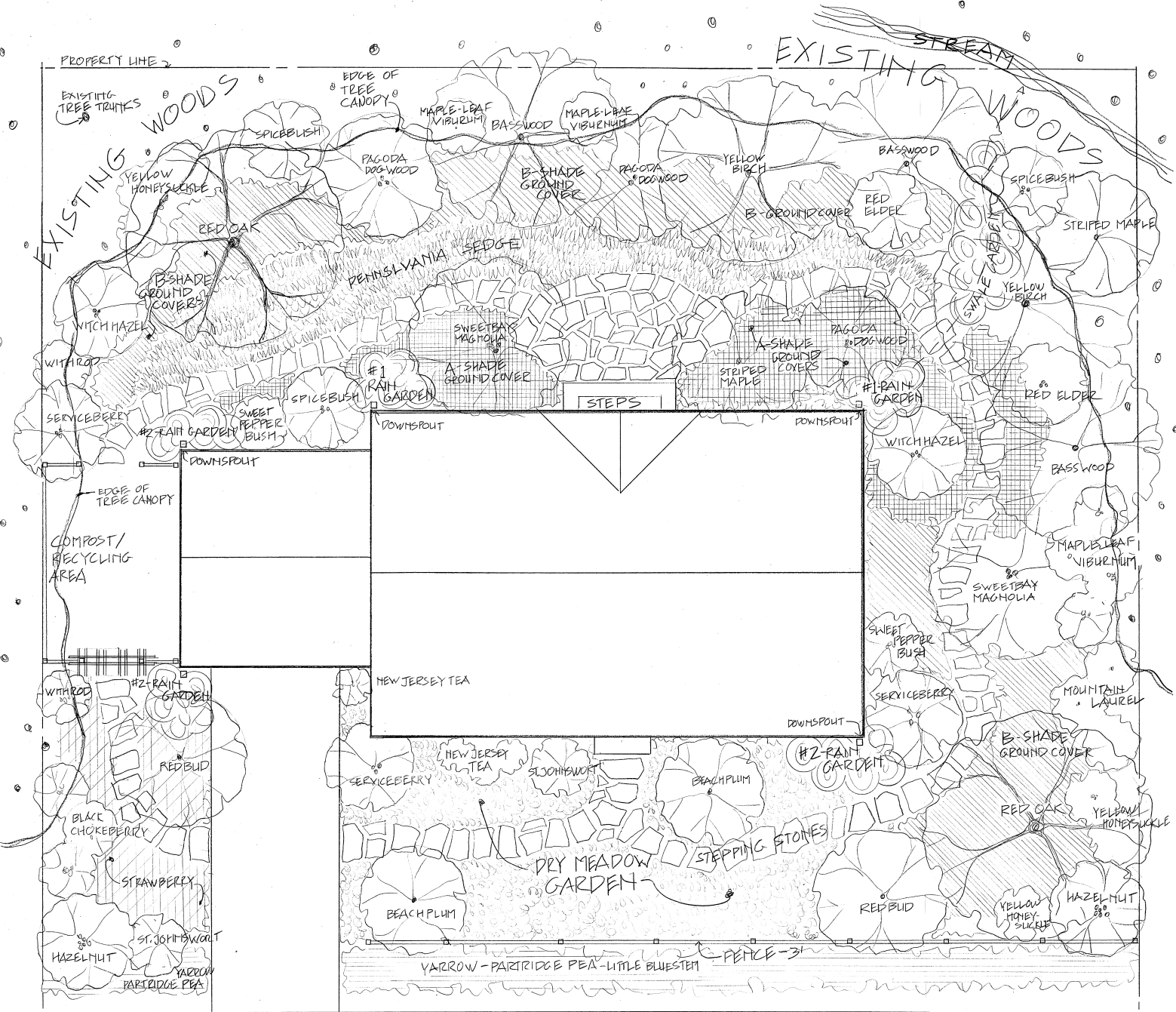




# Wild Ones Native Garden Design: Portland, Maine



MAINE NATIVE GARDEN SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0" 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
DESIGNED BY: HEATHER MCGARGO  
FOR SOUTHERN MAINE FROM BRUNSWICK TO THE NEW HAMPSHIRE BORDER  
FOUNDER-WILD SEED PROJECT





# Wild Seed Project

RETURNING NATIVE PLANTS TO THE MAINE LANDSCAPE

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Wild Ones Design thoughts and Plant Lists

Heather McCargo Sept. 2024

This design is for a residential property in southern Maine, in the region stretching from Brunswick north of Portland to the south and west to the border of New Hampshire. It is typical of other states in northern and central New England.

**Site conditions and Design Intent-** Many residential properties in southern Maine have been carved out of the forest. Most of these woods are have been clear-cut at least once since Colonial times, many repeatedly and are impoverished versions of their past. Many regrown forest in this area are dominated by red maple, but there is also plenty of red oak, with birch, beech, white pine, hemlock, spruce and fir. Soils range from dry sandy or gravelly, to medium moisture loams to wetlands.

Typical with residential development is the removal of the top soil. Heavy machines have also compacted the soil in a zone around the house site. The street side of the house usually has all the trees removed and if is on the south side it is a hot, dry landscape. Sometimes new top soil is reapplied, purchased from former agricultural lands and is loaded with weed seeds.

I chose to focus of my design to address these two design challenges. Some of my favorite native plants thrive in the shade and others thrive in lean hot dry sunny sites. These are conditions that many traditional gardeners struggle most with. Both growing conditions make low maintenance landscapes once established and with the heating climate, the shady places are where we are going to want to be spending time out of doors.

Planting lots of trees and shrubs to create densely layered landscapes restores the earth more effectively than just a low covering of herbaceous plants, as the vertical year-round above ground structure of the woody trunks and branches, along with their extensive root systems underground, will return soil life as well as capturing and storing rain. This is more important than ever as the amount of precipitation is increasing in the northeast, often coming down in torrential storms. Wooded landscapes hold the snow cover and frozen soils for longer, also important for climate stabilizing. And woody plants serve as host plants for many species of fauna, especially the butterfly and moth family, so important for converting plant growth into food for non-plant eating animals.



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### **Site preparation-**

Sunny southeast and southwest side of the property: I recommend soil solarization with black plastic for 2 months during the spring or summer. If done in the fall, leave in place until mid-spring to make sure enough heat has killed the weed seeds and any turf. If sod is growing there, you could also use a soil stripper. Since the plant palate are species that thrive in lean dry soil, stripping away the sod is beneficial. If the soil is heavily compacted, you could so a cover crop of buckwheat to break up the heavy soil. Mow and rake off the buckwheat before planting.

Northeast and northwest side from the house to the woodland edge: I recommend covering the growing spaces with cardboard or heavy brown paper covered with either leaves or shredded bark mulch. The trees and shrubs can be planted through this covering, either before or after. The herbaceous ground layer planting needs to wait at least 3 months till the vegetation underneath is decayed, then holes can be punched through.

All down spouts should have a slight depression of several inches deep by 4-6 feet in diameter for rain garden plantings.

**Architectural elements to a home landscape-** stepping stone pathways and a stone patio are particularly nice in a native garden. Gravel paths and gravel patio areas also work well (and stone paving can be added later if desired). If you want a more formal look, brick is an easy DIY material and even lends itself to curvy paths. A low fence makes a nice tidy edge to the street side of the house and meadow garden. All residential design should include a compost and utility area so people don't send off their prunings in brown paper bags- ecological gardeners keep all harvested plant growth on site.

**Phasing the Plantings** – I always recommend planting the trees first. They are such a structural aspect of the design and take the longest to grow, so get them in the ground ASAP. Plant young saplings over larger specimens, they cost less and they will grow a much healthier root system than a tree that has been coddled in a nursery for 5 or more years. The same is true of the shrubs. For the herbaceous species use first year plants in plug trays or small pots. These are much more economical and they will establish quickly. A few will bloom the first year (Black-eyed Coneflower and Partridge Pea), others in the second or third year. (You can even grow them yourself, visit the Wild Seed Project website to learn how to grow natives from seed). Herbaceous species tend to move around from where they are first planted. I have included different combinations for different planting areas, but unlike the trees which will stay put, herbaceous plantings will change over time. As ecological gardeners, we can do some editing, but we all need to get away from the intense control that has made modern landscape practices the antithesis of what nature wants. Good structure and edging will keep it looking designed. Have fun!

The Wild Seed Project website has lots of great how to blogs:  
<https://wildseedproject.net/wild-seed-blog>

And our printed Guides will help you learn more:  
<https://shop.wildseedproject.net/collections/publications>



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# Plant List- # indicates native south or west of Maine

## TREES AND SHRUBS

Red oak (*Quercus rubra*)  
Basswood (*Tilia americana*)  
Sweet birch (*Betula lenta*)  
Smooth serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*)  
Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)#  
Beach plum (*Prunus maritima*)  
Striped maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*)  
Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)  
Sweetbay magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)#  
Witchhazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)  
Pagoda dogwood (*Swida alternifolia*)  
New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*)  
Coastal sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)  
Witherod (*Viburnum nudum var. cassinoides*)  
Black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)  
American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*)  
Shrubby St. John's-wort (*Hypericum prolificum*)#  
Maple-leaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*)  
Bush honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*)  
Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)

## MID-SIZED SPECIES

Bradbury's bee-balm (*Monarda bradburiana*)#  
Tall anemone (*Anemone virginiana*)  
Foxglove beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)  
Partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*)  
Spotted bee-balm (*Monarda punctata*)  
Hoary vervain (*Verbena stricta*)#  
Pale coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*)#  
Black-eyed coneflower (*Rudbeckia hirta*)  
Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)  
Smooth blue aster (*Symphotrichum laeve*)  
Showy aster (*Eurybia spectabilis*)  
Downy goldenrod (*Solidago puberula*)  
Seaside goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*)  
Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)

## DRY MEADOW GARDEN

Low growing species for edges of paths:  
Birds foot violet (*Viola pedata*)  
Plantain-leaved pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*)  
Northeastern beardtongue (*Penstemon hirsutus*)  
Sundial lupine (*Lupinus perennis*)  
Scotch bellflower (*Campanula rotundifolia*)  
Butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)  
Flax-leaved stiff aster (*Ionactis linariifolia*)

## SHADE GROWDCOVERS - A

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)  
Golden groundsel (*Packera aurea*)  
Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*)  
Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*)  
Green-and-gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*)#  
Woodland stonecrop (*Sedum ternatum*)#  
Red columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)  
Blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)  
Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*)  
Blue-wood aster (*Symphotrichum cordifolium*)

## SHADE GROWDCOVERS - B

Downy Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum pubescens*)  
Solomon's seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*)  
Red baneberry (*Actaea rubra*)  
Cranesbill geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)  
Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium reptans*)  
Showy aster (*Eurybia spectabilis*)  
White wood aster (*Eurybia divaricata*)  
Zigzag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*)  
Blue-stem goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*)  
New York fern (*Parathelypteris noveboracensis*)

## PATCH PLANTINGS

Wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)  
Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*)

## RAIN GARDEN #1

Blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)  
Golden groundsel (*Packera aurea*)  
White turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)  
Royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*)  
Cinnamon fern (*Osmundastrum cinnamomeum*)

## RAIN GARDEN #2

Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*)  
Golden groundsel (*Packera aurea*)  
Golden Alexander (*Zizia aurea*)  
Blue iris (*Iris versicolor*)  
Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)  
Blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*)  
Brown-eyed coneflower (*Rudbeckia triloba*)#

## SWALE GARDEN

Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)  
White turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)  
Royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*)  
Cinnamon fern (*Osmundastrum cinnamomeum*)

