

# GROW WHERE YOU ARE



Design a Space Nature Will Love

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# Grow Where You Are

*A workbook for Small-space Native Gardens*

## Welcome to Grow Where You Are

A Note from the Author-

This workbook was inspired by the many customers who visit Lakeside Perennials & Native Plant Nursery—people who want to restore natural habitat but aren't always sure where to begin.

At Lakeside, our mission is simple: to help others return native habitat to their yards and lakeshores, no matter how large or small the space. Our nursery is named for the natural setting of our property on Half Mile Lake, where hundreds of wild lupine grow each spring. These plants are especially meaningful to us—they are the sole food source for the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly caterpillar.

Whether you're new to native plants or have been gardening with them for years, visitors to our nursery are welcomed by a thriving woodland setting filled with wildlife. It's a living reminder that when we plant natives, even in small ways, we create real change.

This workbook invites you to be part of that mission—restoring native habitat, one small space at a time.

*Marilyn Klemm -*

# Grow Where You Are

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## Welcome...

A warm introduction to your journey — what it means to Grow Where You Are and how small, intentional steps can transform your space into a thriving native habitat.

Why Natives? and just what are native plants?

A native plant is one that you will find growing naturally in a region and has adapted to the local climate, soil, and wildlife.

They are important because they support pollinators and ecosystems, require fewer resources, and help create healthier, more resilient landscapes.

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Studies show native plants support significantly more pollinators than non-native landscapes—even when planted in small spaces.

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# Grow Where You Are

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### **Section 1: Getting Started**      page 9 - 12

Discover your purpose and understand your space before you plant.

- A. Define Your Why                      page 13-20
- B. Working with a HOA                page 21 & 44
- C. Assess Your Space                  page 23-34
- D. Choose Your Focus Area        page 35 - 46

### **Section 2: Plan Your Design**

Create a layout that's both beautiful and beneficial.

- A. Dream & Visualize                page 49 -54
- B. Plan Your Layers                  page 55-58
- C. Grouping & Flow                page 59-62
- D. Design Checklist                page 63-64

### **Section 3: Prepare & Plant**

- A. Site Prep Options                page 66 - 69
- B. Soil Building Basics            page 69
- C. Planting Day Steps            page 70-72
- D. Early Care & Maintenance    page 73-78

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## Section 4: Grow & Maintain

- A. Seasonal Care at a Glance      page 81 - 82
- B. Know What to Expect      page 83 - 85
- C. Maintenance Made Simple      page 86 - 88
- D. Expanding Your Habitat      page 92 - 98

- Resources**      page 97
- What's Next**      page 98-100

## Closing Thoughts...

“Every native plant you grow adds life to the landscape — and every small space you tend makes a difference.”



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# Grow Where You Are

## *A workbook for Small-Space Native Gardens*

What to expect and how to go through this workbook.

Grow Where You Are Workbook will cover:

- Discover your why for Native Gardening
- Break it Down - DIY, DWF, DFY
- Your Blueprint

Native plants support up to 4× more pollinator species than non-natives



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## How to Use This Planner

### **Go at Your Own Pace**

This is a self-guided workbook. You can work through it season by season. Focus on doing one container this year, or adding a new garden bed/redoing a garden bed, or go big and replace a section of your yard.

### **Reflect, Plan, and Record**

Use the journaling prompts, worksheets, and sketch boxes to collect your thoughts and observations. Each section builds on the last, helping you create a clear, meaningful garden plan.

### **Start Small**

You do not need a huge space to make an impact. Choose one small area to begin – a corner bed, container garden, or strip of lawn – and grow from there.

### **Observe Before You Act**

Spend time noticing your light, soil, and wildlife patterns before planting. Observation leads to better, lower-maintenance results.

### **Customize It**

Print the pages you need, take notes, add photos, or color swatches, and make it your own. There's space to sketch, doodle, and dream.

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## What You'll Need:

- Pencil or pen for notes
- Ruler or colored pencils for sketches
- Photos or color inspiration (optional)
- Access to local native plant lists or guides
  - While this workbook focuses on principles, and not specific plants. I do suggest you research:
    - Local native plant societies
    - Extension offices
    - Native-focused nurseries

## Let's Get Growing!



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## SECTION 1 – Getting Started

Define Your Why (journaling prompts)

- Assess Your Space (chart + notes)
- Choose Your Focus Area (sketch/photo frame + checkboxes)
- Before Snapshot (photo frame + notes)



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## Define Your Why -

Before you start planning or planting, take a moment to connect with the reason you are drawn to this journey.

Every garden begins with purpose — whether it is creating a peaceful refuge, supporting pollinators, or simply making a small difference right where you live.

Your “why” will guide every choice you make, from the plants you select to how you care for them.

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## Define Your Why -

Find a quiet moment, grab your favorite pen, and let your thoughts flow. There are no right or wrong answers — just honest reflections to help you grow where you are.

Then follow with your six prompts:

1. What inspired you to start gardening with native plants?
2. What do you hope your space will bring to your yard?
3. When you picture your finished garden, what do you see and feel?
4. What challenges or limitations are you working with?
5. How do you want your garden to give back — to you, your family, or wildlife?
6. What does “grow where you are” mean to you personally?













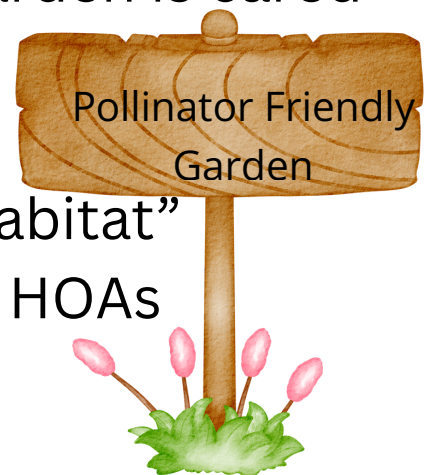
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## Working with a HOA

An Intentional Design Helps Gardens Thrive:

- Know the rules and design for approval.
- Submit a plan and educate the board.
- Start small and build.
- Defined edges, mulch, and clear pathways signal that your garden is cared for on purpose.
- Adding a small “Pollinator Habitat” sign can help neighbors and HOAs understand the goal of your garden at a glance.



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## Section 1B: Assess Your Space

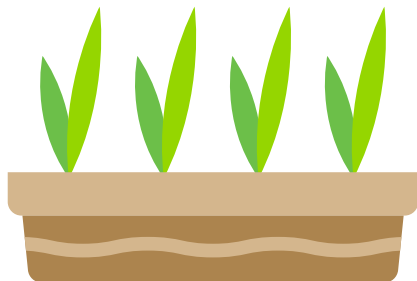
Before you choose a single plant, spend time observing what’s already happening in your yard.

Every small space has its own light, soil, and rhythm. By noticing these details, you’ll discover what your site naturally supports — and how to work with it, not against it.

Use the following pages to record your observations. These notes will become the foundation of your native garden design.

### **Small Spaces Matter...**

A single container, balcony planter, or small bed can serve as a vital food stop for pollinators. Think of your garden as a stepping stone, helping pollinators move safely from one habitat to the next.



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## Section 1B: Assess Your Space

### Sunlight Patterns

- How many hours of direct sun does this area receive (morning, midday, afternoon)?

- Morning: \_\_\_\_\_

- Afternoon: \_\_\_\_\_

- Evening: \_\_\_\_\_

- Does light shift seasonally due to trees or nearby structures?

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## Section 1B: Assess Your Space

### Soil Type & Texture

- Take a handful – does it feel sandy, silty, or heavy like clay?

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- Does water drain quickly or sit after rain?

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- Record your soil test results if available (pH, nutrients). (Test kits can be purchased at most hardware stores or garden centers)

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## Section 1B: Assess Your Space

### Soil Type & Texture Chart

Soil Type	Water Drainage	Soil PH

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## Section 1B: Assess Your Space

### Moisture & Drainage Designs Your Space Nature Will Love

After a rainfall, where does water pool or flow?  
Is this area often dry between rains?

Checklist:

- Dry
- Medium
- Moist
- Standing Water
- Standing Water -5 hours or less
- Standing Water -6 or more hours

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## Section 1B: Assess Your Space

### Existing Plants & Wildlife

- What's growing here now (trees, lawn, weeds, volunteers)?
- Are pollinators, birds, or butterflies already visiting?

Notes:

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## Section 1B: Assess Your Space

### Microclimates & Features

- Are there wind pockets, heat-reflecting walls, shady corners, or low spots?
- Note any nearby hardscapes (driveways, fences, patios) that influence conditions.
- Special Observations:

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# Grow Where You Are

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## Section 1B: Assess Your Space

### Microclimates & Features

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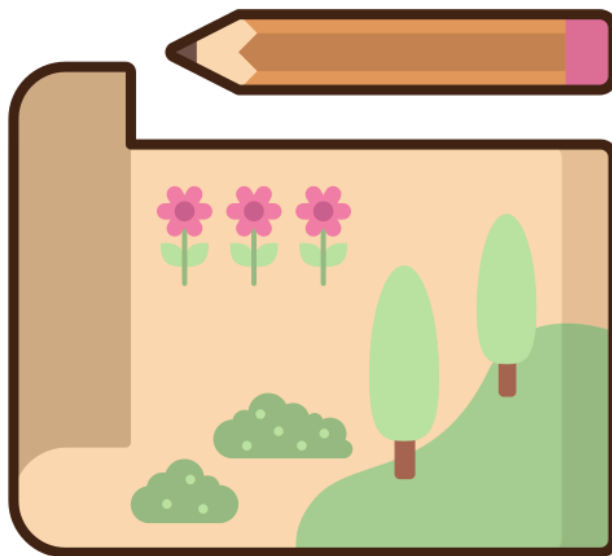
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## Section 1B: Assess Your Space

### Sketch your area from above

Use the following page to note existing plants, sunlight direction, and features (house, trees, driveway, sidewalks, patios, etc.)

**Tip:** Use arrows for sunlight or water flow







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## Section 1B: Assess Your Space

### Before" Snapshot Box

Insert or tape a photo of your chosen space here.

*Label the date and season — you will love comparing it later!*

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## Section 1C: Choose Your Focus Area

### Induction...

Now that you have observed your yard, it is time to choose one small space to begin.

Starting small helps you see progress quickly, build confidence, and learn what works in your unique conditions.

Whether it is a sunny corner by the patio or a shady spot under a tree, the key is to begin where you are and grow from there.

Research and observation show pollinators regularly visit container gardens, balconies, and small yard plantings—especially when plants are grouped.

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Notes....

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### Section 1C: Choose Your Focus Area

- What area feels most inviting or inspiring to you?

*Where do you naturally spend time or notice wildlife?*

- Which area needs the most improvement?

- *Is there a spot that could be transformed from “problem” to “pollinator haven”?*

- What conditions make this space easy (or challenging) to work with?

- *Think access to water, sunlight, soil, and nearby plants or structures.*

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# Grow Where You Are

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## Section 1C: Choose Your Focus Area

What is your main goal for this space?

Add beauty

Support pollinators

Reduce lawn care

Create privacy

Manage drainage

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How much time and budget can you invest this season?

*A realistic plan helps you enjoy the process  
without being overwhelmed.*

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## Worksheet: Your Chosen Space

Area Name/Location
Size or Dimensions
Sunlight
Soil Type
Moisture Level
Existing Plants
Goal for This Area

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## Sketch or Photo of Area

Draw, tape, or attach a photo of your chosen focus area. Use arrows to show sunlight direction and label key features.

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Reflect on your area:

**SUN:** Full / Partial / Shade

**SPACE:** Container/ Small Bed/ Yard

**CONSTRAINTS:** HOA/ Pets/  
Foot Traffic

**OTHER** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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### **HOA & Neighbor Concerns**

Native gardens belong in every community--even HOAs.

You can create a native garden with intentional design and the right plant choices, native landscapes can be clean, compliant, and community-friendly.

A well-planned native garden shows that sustainability and curb appeal can grow side-by-side.

Native gardens are not wild or unruly--they are intentional, low-maintenance, and community-friendly.

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University extension studies show . . .  
Even small native gardens can increase local pollinator visits by 30–50%



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Your garden doesn't need to be a destination. Sometimes it's just a stepping stone—helping pollinators move safely from one place to the next.



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## Introduction

Now that you've chosen your starting space, it's time to design it with purpose.

A good native garden design blends beauty, function, and ecological value — and it doesn't need to be complicated.

This section will help you translate your vision into a simple layout that works for your space and supports local wildlife.

Think of it as your blueprint for growing something that's both beautiful and beneficial.

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## 2A. Dream & Visualize

Start with what inspires you. What do you want your space to feel like?

- Peaceful retreat
- Pollinator party
- Natural meadow
- Structured border

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## 2A. Dream & Visualize

Notes....

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# Grow Where You Are

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## 2A. Dream & Visualize

- What colors or moods do you want to create?
- Are there plants you've always loved or want to include?
- What native habitats inspire you most—meadow, woodland, prairie, or wetland?
- How do you want people (or wildlife) to experience this space?

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## 2A. Dream & Visualize

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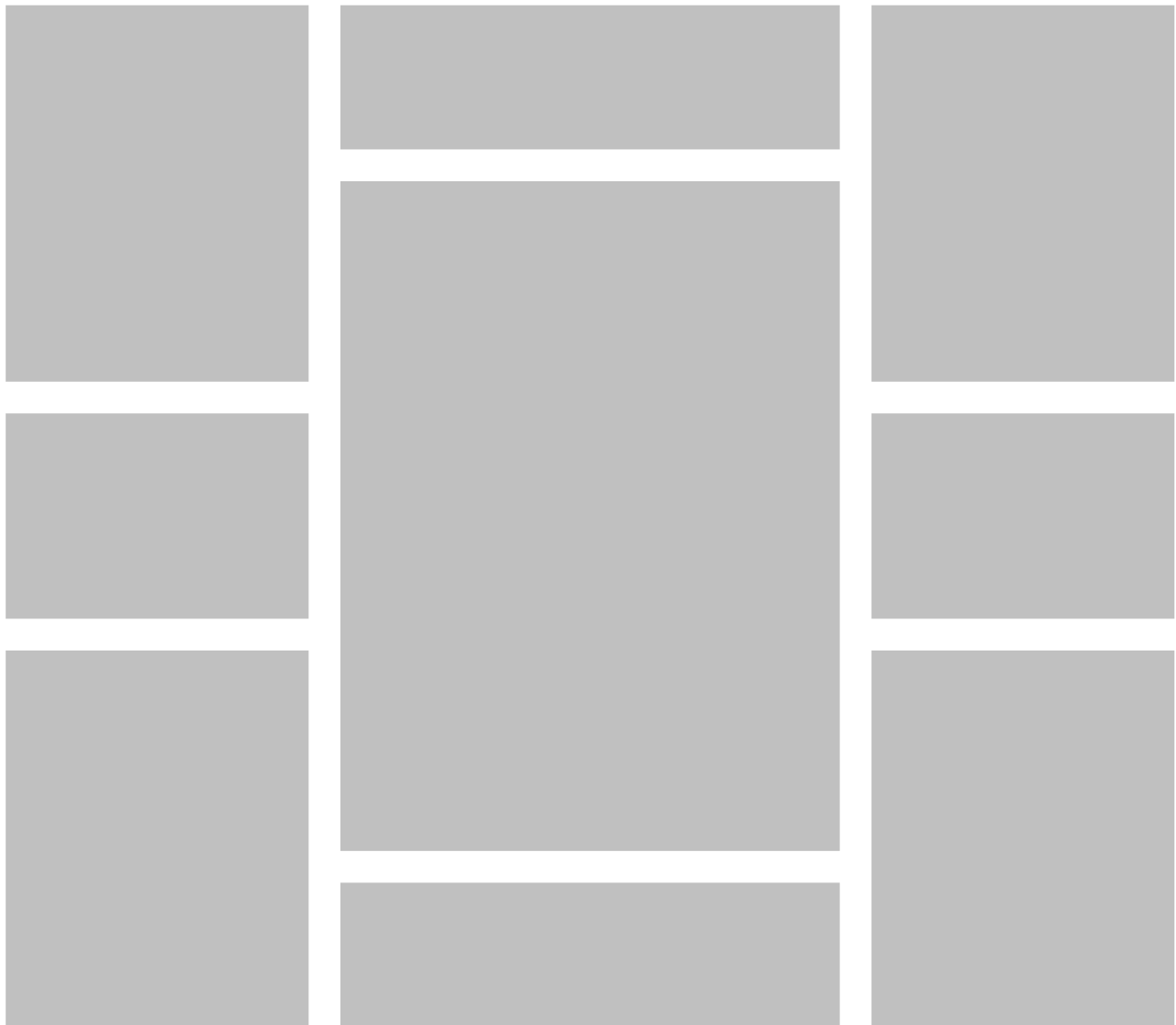
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## 2A. Dream & Visualize

Create a Mood Board Box: include image cutouts or color swatches.

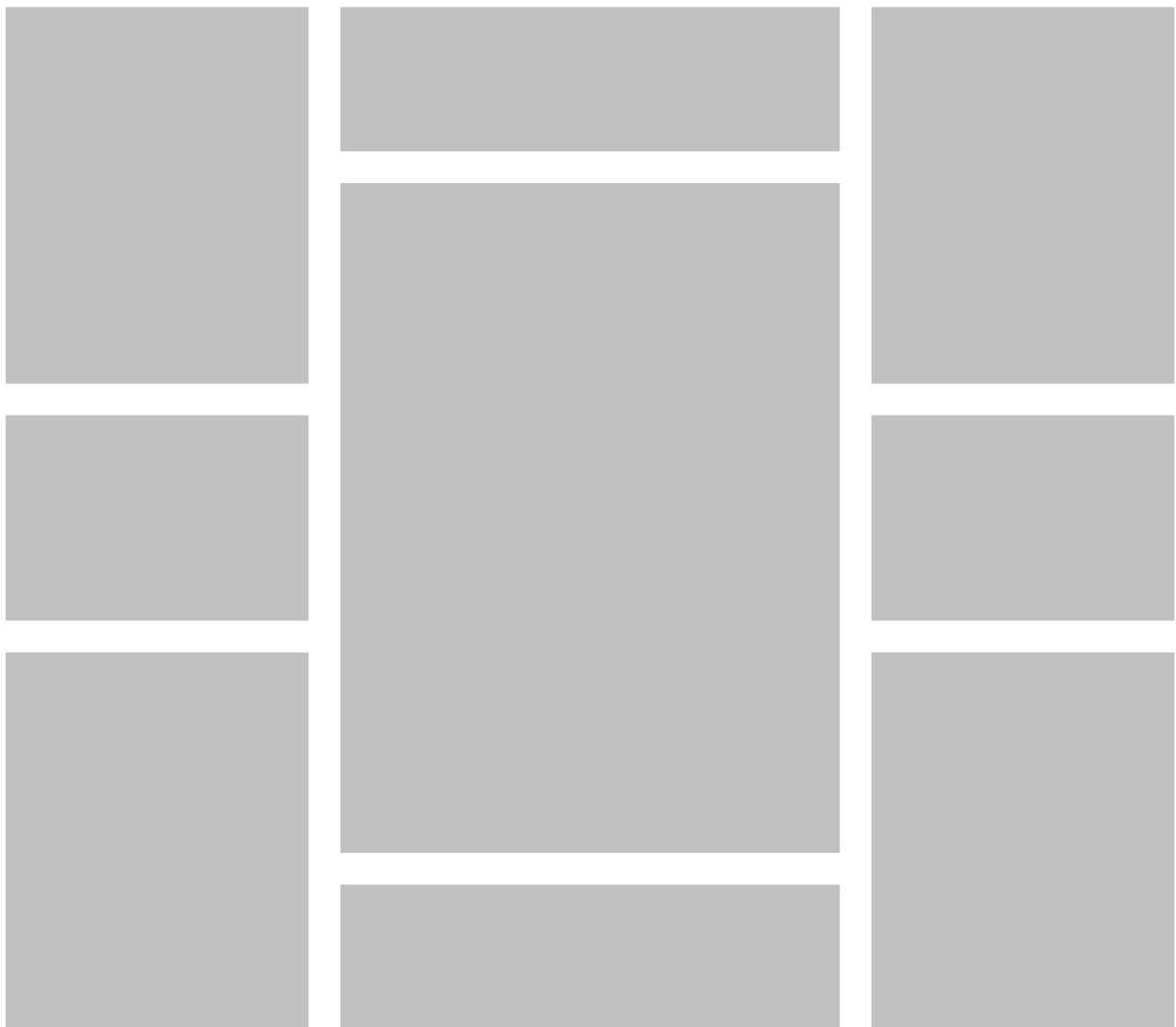


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## 2A. Dream & Visualize

Create a Mood Board Box: include image cutouts or color swatches.



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## 2B. Plan Your Layers

Healthy native gardens mimic nature by using plant layers.

A successful layered native garden works by using plants that grow and change throughout the seasons and over the years. Each layer adds its own texture, color, and character, creating a space that feels rich, natural, and full of life.

By combining plants with different heights, shapes, and bloom times — some contrasting, some complementary — you build a garden that looks beautiful from every angle and supports wildlife all year long.

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## 2B. Plan Your Layers

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## 2B. Plan Your Layers

Use this guide to plan what belongs in each layer:

Layer	Role	Example Plants (Great Lakes Region)	Your Choices
<b>Canopy / Tall Shrubs</b>	Structure, shade	Serviceberry, Ninebark	
<b>Mid-Layer / Perennials</b>	Color, seasonal interest	Coneflower, Wild Bergamot, Black-eyed Susan	
<b>Ground Layer</b>	Soil cover, pollinator access	Wild Strawberry, Pennsylvania Sedge	
<b>Seasonal Interest</b>	Year-round beauty	Spring ephemerals, fall asters, winter grasses	

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## 2B. Plan Your Layers

### Think Like a Forest

Healthy ecosystems are layered—just like forests. When your garden includes a mix of heights and bloom times, you create shelter, food, and stability for pollinators throughout the season.



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## 2C. Grouping & Flow

Nature doesn't plant in straight rows!

With native plants, think “better together.”

Grouping plants in clusters, instead of scattering individual species.

Clusters creates a healthier, more resilient garden. Thus boosting pollinator activity, improve soil and water retention, and help your plants thrive long-term.

Why this works -  
Pollinators locate food more easily when the same plant appears in clusters rather than scattered singles

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## 2C. Grouping & Flow

### Tips:

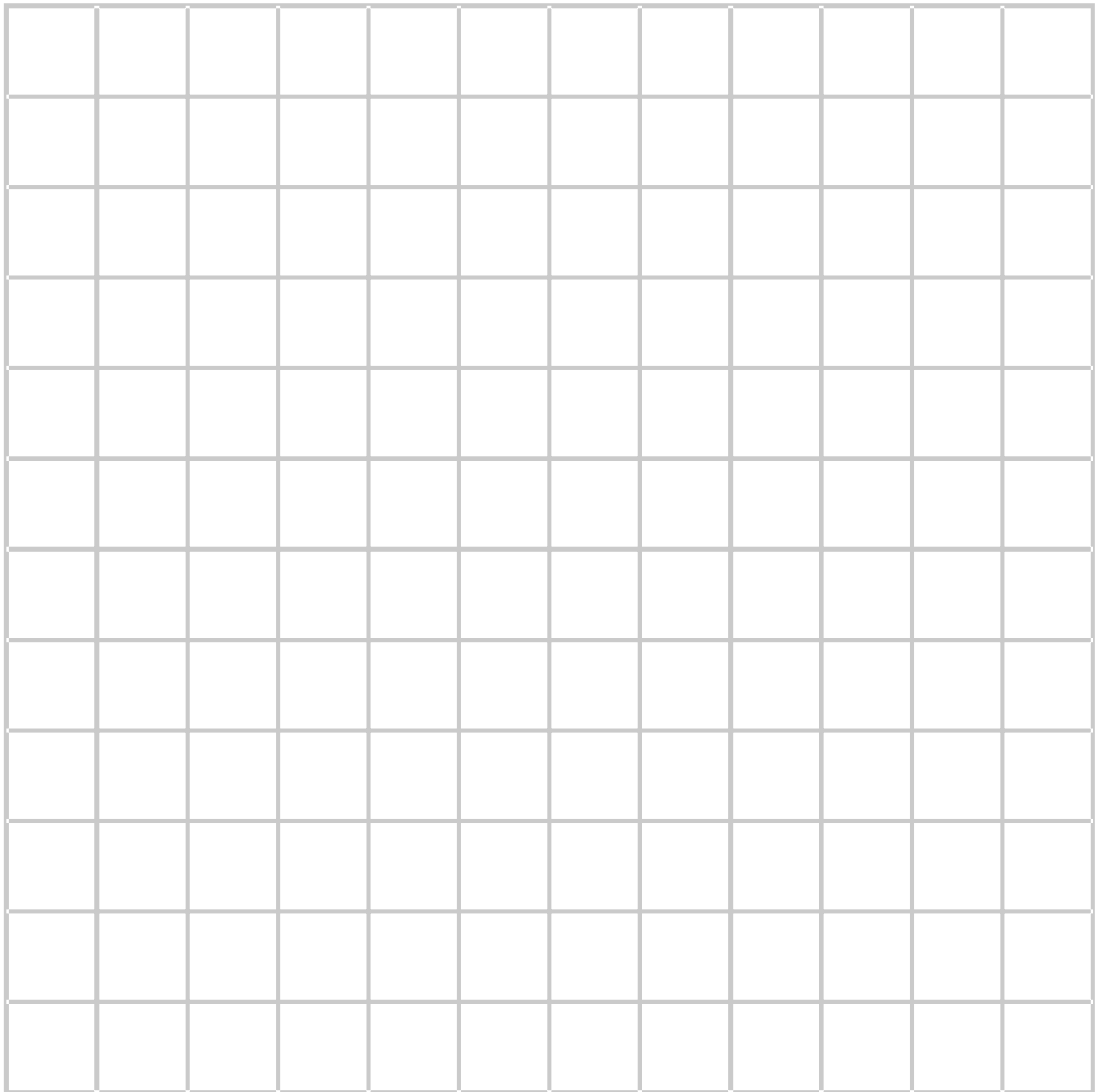
- Combine plants that share the same light and moisture needs.
- Mix bloom times so something is always in flower.
- Leave room for paths or stepping stones.
- Keep tall plants toward the back or center of your space.
- Consider adding a focal point such as a bird bath, bench or small pond.

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## 2C. Grouping & Flow

Grid for layout planning

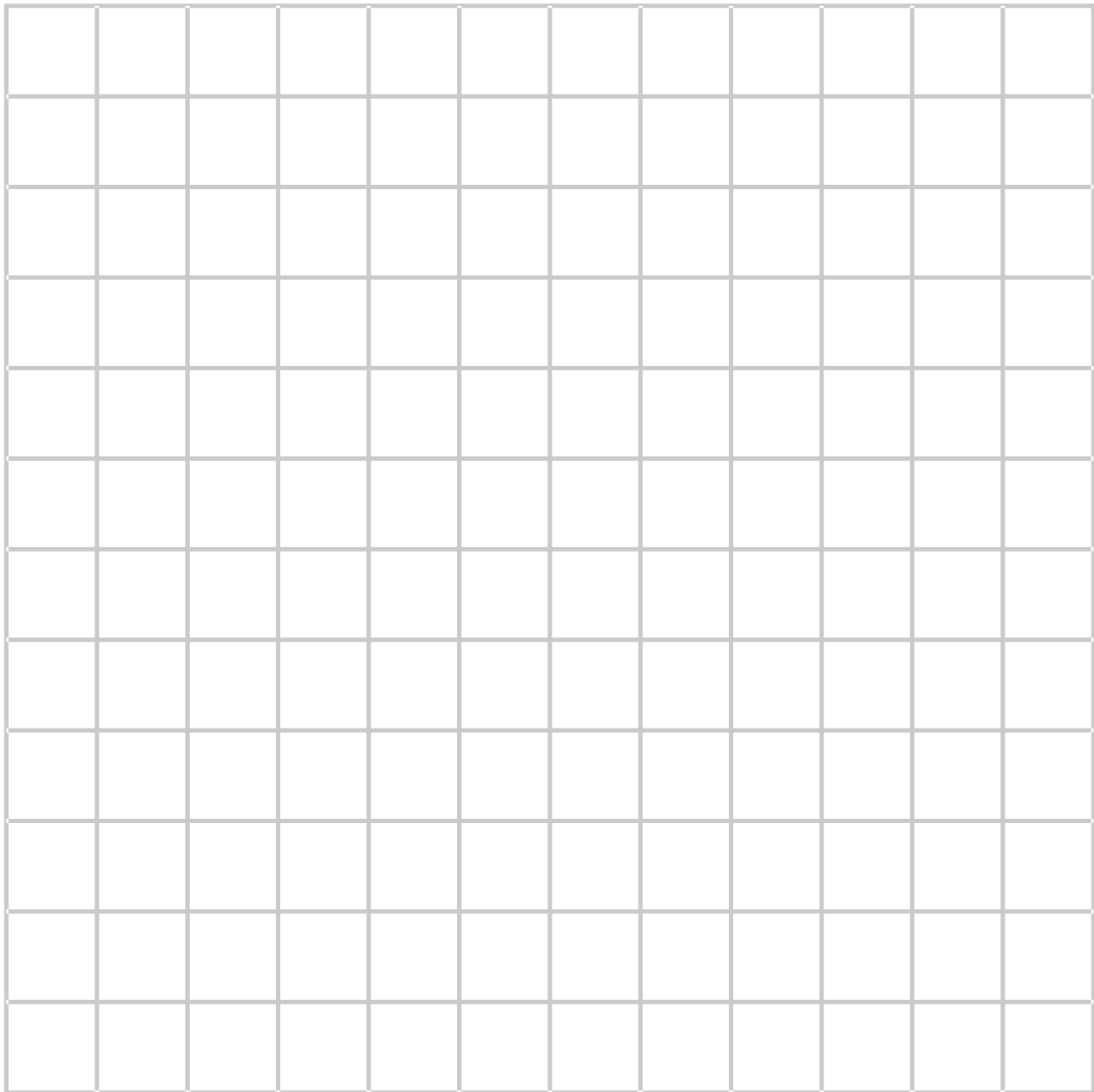


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## 2C. Grouping & Flow

Grid for layout planning



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## 2D. Design Checklist

Before you finalize your plan, review your layout with these key questions:

- Do I have plants for all three layers (tall, medium, low)?
- Will this space have something blooming in spring, summer, and fall?
- Did I group plants by similar needs?
- Is there a defined edge or border for a tidy appearance?
- Does this design align with my original “why”?

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## Prepare & Plant

It's time to bring your vision to life!

This is where planning meets action — where your design starts to grow. Don't worry if your space isn't perfect yet; nature rewards progress, not perfection.

Preparing your soil, planting thoughtfully, and caring for young plants will set the stage for long-term success and less maintenance later on.



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## 3A. Site Prep Options

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### 3A. Site Prep Options

Before planting, decide how you'll prepare your chosen space. Each method helps reduce weeds and give your native plants a healthy start.

Method	Best For	Steps	Notes
<b>Smothering (Sheet Mulch)</b>	New beds over lawn	Layer cardboard + mulch; wait 2–4 months	Low effort, great for HOAs
<b>Sod Removal</b>	Small areas	Cut and remove turf with spade	Quick but labor-intensive
<b>Solarization</b>	Sunny sites	Cover with clear plastic for 4–6 weeks	Fast weed control
<b>Tilling + Mulch Cover</b>	Poor soil or weedy areas	Till once, then add compost + mulch	Avoid frequent tilling

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## 3B. Soil Building Basics

Healthy soil = healthy plants.

### SECTION 3 Prepare and Plant

Use this checklist to assess and improve your soil naturally:

- Test drainage by filling a small hole with water (should drain within 24 hrs).
- Mix in compost or leaf mold to improve structure.
- Avoid synthetic fertilizers — native plants thrive in leaner soils.
- Mulch lightly after planting to conserve moisture.
- **Tip:** If your soil is poor, focus on selecting native plants that naturally grow in similar conditions — they'll do the work for you.

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## 3C. Planting Day Steps

Your garden is ready — let's plant!

1. Lay out your plants according to your design.
2. Adjust spacing before digging.
3. Dig holes twice as wide as the root ball but no deeper.
4. Gently loosen roots if pot-bound.
5. Set plants in holes and backfill with native soil.
6. Water thoroughly after planting.
7. Add mulch (2–3 inches) — but keep it away from stems or crowns.
8. Label plants to remember what's where.

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## Planting Notes....

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## 3D. Early Care & Maintenance

Your first growing season is about establishment.

Think: water, watch, and wait – nature will take it from there.

Native plants vary as to when they will bloom, very few with bloom the first year, others two or more years before blooming. Patience is key!

Native Garden  
Growth = Building  
Roots Before  
Blooms



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## Planting Notes....

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## 3D. Early Care & Maintenance

### Weekly Care Checklist (First 6–8 Weeks):

- Water deeply once or twice a week if no rain.
- Remove weeds before they flower.
- Observe — note which plants attract pollinators.
- Replace mulch if soil becomes exposed.

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## 3D. Words of Encouragement...

“Every native plant you grow supports a living network.

Keep going — your small space is part of something big.”



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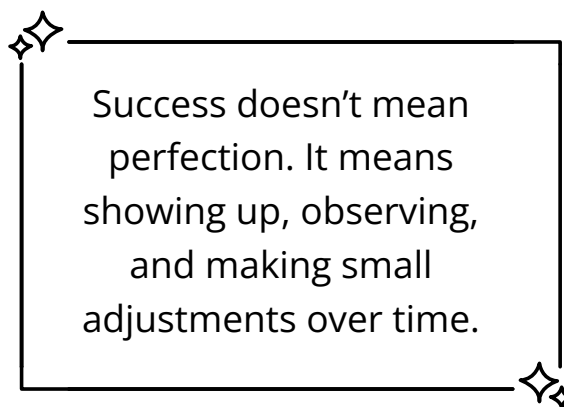
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## Section 4: Grow & Maintain

Congratulations — your native garden is growing!

This section will help you nurture it through the seasons and enjoy the changes each brings. A thriving habitat evolves over time, and your care will shift from planting and weeding to observing and celebrating.

Think of this as your guide to tending what you've started and growing your impact, one space at a time.



Success doesn't mean perfection. It means showing up, observing, and making small adjustments over time.

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## 4A. Seasonal Care at a Glance

Season	Focus	Tasks
Spring	Renewal	Cut back dead stems in late spring (after insects emerge), divide crowded plants, refresh mulch lightly.
Summer	Maintenance	Water during dry spells, deadhead strategically (leave some seedheads for wildlife), take notes on bloom times.
Fall	Preparation	Add new plants, plant seeds, leave stems and seedheads for overwintering insects and birds.
Winter	Rest & Reflect	Observe structure, note wildlife visitors, sketch plans for next year.

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Notes....

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## 4B. Know What to Expect

Native gardens often follow a “three-year rhythm”:

**Year One — Sleep:** Plants focus on roots; growth may be slow.

**Year Two — Creep:** Plants start to spread and fill in.

**Year Three — Leap:** Your space becomes lush, balanced, and full of life.



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“Be patient — native gardens are built for longevity. What you plant today becomes next year’s habitat.”



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## What Your Garden Might Look Like in Year One

- Sparse growth- the first year native plants are focusing on developing their roots, plants will seem sparse, do not be afraid to keep them trimmed back a little.
- Fewer blooms - very few natives will bloom their first year, each year you will see more plants in bloom.
- More leaf growth than flowers-this is normal and good.
- Many native plants focus on root growth their first year. This is why blooms often increase dramatically in year two.

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## Seasonal Notes & Observations

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Most native plants spend the first year  
growing roots, not flowers.

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## 4C. Maintenance Made Simple

Use this quick checklist to keep your space thriving without overwhelm:

- Water deeply during extended dry spells.
- Weed young areas once a month (less over time).
- Re-edge or tidy borders to keep a neat appearance (great for HOAs).
- Record bloom times and pollinator visits.
- Add a few plants each season to expand your habitat.

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Notes....

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# Grow Where You Are

*A workbook for Small-Space Native Gardens*

## 4D. Expanding Your Habitat

Once your first space is thriving, you're ready to grow where you are again.

Start small — one new border, bed, or container at a time.

### Ideas for Expansion:

- Convert a sunny strip along your driveway into a pollinator border.
- Replace another patch of lawn with native groundcovers.
- Add a small rain garden or bird-friendly water source.
- Share seeds or starter plants with neighbors.

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**How can you inspire someone else to grow where they are?**

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Notes....

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## 4E. Reflection & Celebration

Reflect on how far you've come.

1. What's your favorite moment in the garden so far?

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2. How has your view of gardening changed?

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## 4E. Reflection & Celebration

Reflect on how far you've come.

3. What wildlife have you noticed visiting?

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4. What's one thing you'll try next season?

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Notes....

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**Thank you for growing where you are.  
Every native plant tells a story — and yours  
has just begun.”**



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## Garden with Native Plants

There are many online resources that can help you select appropriate species for your area. Here are a few places to start:

- 1. Audubon Native Plants Database**
- 2. Xerces Society Pollinator-Friendly Native Plant Lists**
- 3. Native Plant Materials Directory**
- 4. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Guide to Native Plant Gardening**
- 5. National Wildlife Federation Native Plant Finder**
- 6. USDA Plant Data Base**
- 7. [Homegrownnationalpark.org/keystone-plants/](http://Homegrownnationalpark.org/keystone-plants/)**

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### What Comes Next ...

Starting a native garden isn't a one-time decision—it's an ongoing relationship. And you don't have to figure it out alone. More Pollinate & Thrive resources are on the way, including:

- simple seasonal care guidance
- small-space and container ideas
- beginner-friendly plant spacing and grouping help
- reassurance for common “Is this normal?” moments

If you'd like continued guidance, encouragement, and early access to new resources, you're warmly invited to:

→ Connect with us on social media:

- [www.pollinateandthrive.com](http://www.pollinateandthrive.com)
- Instagram: [pollinateandthrive](#)
- Facebook: [pollinateandthrive](#)

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## What Comes Next ...

You'll receive gentle reminders, practical tips, and updates as new tools become available.

## You can also:

- Explore the website for current resources and inspiration
- Access additional guides designed to grow with you as your garden evolves
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Your feedback helps shape what comes next.

If you have questions, ideas, or topics you'd love support with, you're always welcome to share them.

This garden—and this community—grows one thoughtful step at a time.

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If there's one thing to take with you from this workbook, let it be this:

You are not behind.

You are not doing it wrong. And you don't need to have everything figured out.

Native gardens grow in relationship—with the land, with the seasons, and with the people tending them. They respond over time, often quietly at first, building strength beneath the surface before showing much above it.

Whatever space you're working with—large or small, tidy or imperfect—it's enough to begin.

As you move forward, let curiosity guide you more than certainty. Notice what's growing, what's changing, and what's asking for a little more time. These observations matter just as much as any plan.

Thank you for choosing to grow where you are.

What you're creating matters, even when it's just beginning.

*Marilyn Klemm*