

# Trialing Herbaceous, Native Perennials as Cut Flowers and Foliage

Alex Cacciari - Seeley Farm - Ann Arbor, MI



# Sources - Information about native plants



“Landscaping with Native Plants of Michigan”

By Lynn M. Steiner

“15 Tried and True Native Plants for North American Flower Farmers”

By Jennie Love of Love ‘n’ Fresh Flowers

“Native Cut Flowers” Univ. of MD Extension 2018 Cut Flowers Short Course

By Sara Tangren

“How to use Native Flowers in Arrangements”, and other articles

By Kate Bowry, Donna Wily of the Mt. Cuba Center

[www.grownative.org](http://www.grownative.org) - List of plants with links to their native range on a US map

# Sources - Seed and Plant Material



**Feral Flora - Ann Arbor, MI nursery - 3” pots and plug trays**

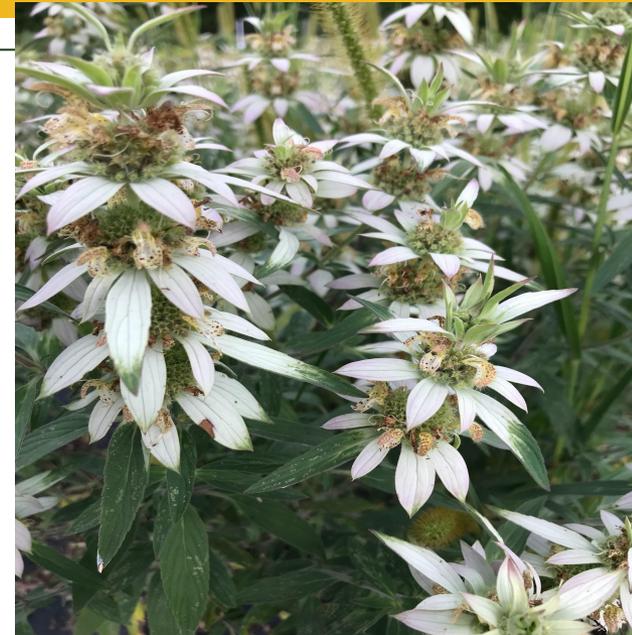
**Wildtype - Mason, MI nursery - 3” pots and plug trays**

**North Creek Nurseries - PA nursery -also offers “nativars”**

**K Van Bourgondinen - bare root source for filipendula**

**Prairie Moon Nursery - online nursery**

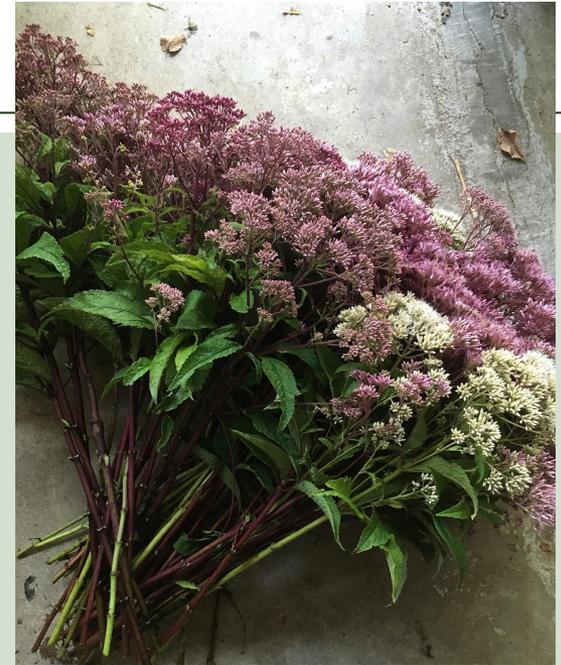
**American Meadows - seed catalogue**



# Project Objectives



- Trial 25 species of herbaceous native perennial plants for their value and use in the wholesale floral trade
- Test bunches of cut stems in the marketplace by offering them to florists for free in exchange for feedback
- Determine the most promising species of the trial, and promote to both other cut flower growers and flower buyers (florists, floral designers, wholesalers, etc.)
- Long term for growers: to increase the propagation and planting of native plants for environmental benefit, and create sustainable source of revenue
- Long term for florists: To increase awareness of the importance of supporting native habitat, and educate about the seasonality of perennial flower crops



# Trial Plant List



- *Chasmanthium latifolium*, Northern Sea Oats
- *Scirpus cyperinus*, Woolly Bulrush
- *Schizachyrium scoparium*, Little Bluestem
- *Pycnanthemum muticum*, Blunt Mountain Mint
- *Amsonia hubrichtii*, Blue Star
- *Baptisia australis*
- *Polygonatum biflorum*, Solomon's Seal
- *Solidago rugosa*, "Fireworks" Goldenrod
- *Monarda punctata*, Spotted Bee Balm
- *Eupatorium maculatum*, Joe-pye weed "Gateway"
- *Rudbeckia fulgida*, "Goldsturm"
- *Iris versicolor*, Blue Flag Iris
- *Lupinus perennis*, "Russels Blue" lupine
- *Asclepias incarnata*, "Cinderella" and "Ice Ballet"
- *Penstemon digitalis*, Hairy Beardtongue
- *Physostegia virginiana*, Obedient Plant
- *Apocynum cannabinum*, Dogbane
- *Asclepias tuberosa*, Butterfly Weed
- *Eryngium yuccifolium*, Rattlesnake Master
- *Euphorbia corrolata*, Flowering Spurge
- *Gentiana spp*, "True Blue"
- *Parthenium integrifolium*, Wild Quinine
- *Filipendula rubra*, Queen of the Prairie

# Bed Layout, Prep, and Planting



**Feb 2021 - sourced plugs and bare roots for spring planting**

**May 2021 - spaded and spread compost in 5” wide row with established 4” clover paths between. Rolled out 6’ landscape fabric with holes burned in a 3-row/12” pattern. NO irrigation installed.**

**May 2021 - August 2021 - planted plugs and bare roots in prepared beds**

**Trial beds were interplanted in an Alley Cropping system funded by NRCS-EQIP. 2 rows of native woody species including red twig dogwood, hazels, winterberry (ilex), elderberry, snowberry, spicebush, and viburnum**

# Bed Layout, Prep, and Planting



# Harvest Season 2022

Harvest began in mid-May and ended mid-September



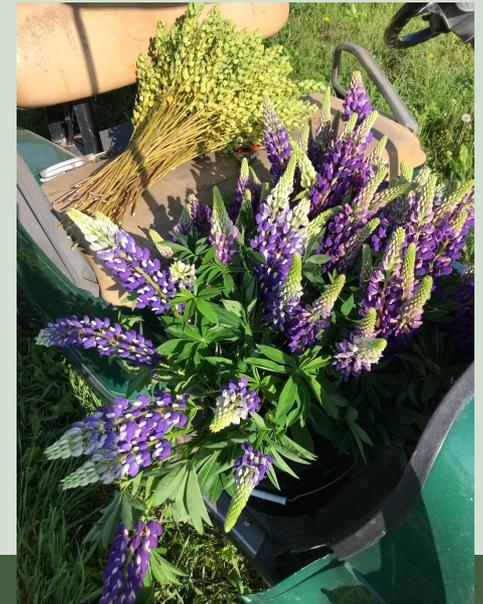
-Harvested bunches were brought to the MI Flower Growers Cooperative weekly and distributed to 42 florists in the Ann Arbor/Detroit region

-131 total bunches of flowers and foliage distributed

-Everyone was **THRILLED!**



# Harvest Season 2022



# Crop Failure

9 of the 25 species either failed to thrive in the field, or did not produce marketable stems by 2022:



1. *Eryngium Yuccifolium* (rattlesnake master) - requires extremely well-drained soil
2. *Euphorbia corrolata* (flowering spurge) - requires extremely well-drained soil
3. *Filipendula rubra* (Queen of the Prairie) - plants thrived, but deer ate flower heads
4. Gentian “true blue” - slow growing, requires well-drained soil
5. *Parthenium integrifolium* - plugs frost heaved over winter 2021-22
  6. *Penstemon digitalis* - short stems, unmarketable
  7. *Physostegia virginiana* - short stems, unmarketable
  8. *Asclepias tuberosa* - frost-heaved, requires dry sandy soil
  9. *Apocynum Androsaemifolium* - frost-heaved over winter

# Florist Feedback Survey



# On-Farm Survey



# Trial Results



**Recommended Plants**

**Recommended plants  
(with caveat)**



# Questions?



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**“Trialing Native, Herbaceous Perennials as Cut Flowers and Foliage for Sale to the Wholesale Floral Industry”**