



# Choosing plants for landscaping in Bloomington

With the wide range of plants available for landscaping projects, it can be hard to know what to choose. Some plants are easy to use & maintain while also supporting the ecosystems around us; others can cause unintended harm to local environments and may even be prohibited by city, state, or federal regulation. This is a guide that can help get you started on figuring what plants you should—and shouldn't—use in your landscaping.

## What plants should I use?

Using native plants benefits both you and the environment. Native plants are adapted to local climate & soil conditions, so they usually need less watering, fertilizer, pesticides, and other maintenance than non-native species. Native plants tend to grow deeper roots than popular non-natives, allowing them to better absorb stormwater into the ground and help prevent problems like flooding and erosion. Many native plants provide habitat & food for beneficial wildlife like bees, butterflies, and birds and help preserve local biodiversity & ecosystem function. In contrast, many non-native plants are rapidly depleting biodiversity and creating monoculture ecological deserts.



[Section 20.04.080\(d\) of the Bloomington UDO](#) provides a list of plants permitted for use in development within the city. All plants on this list are native, and it serves as a good starting point for natives that may be well-suited for landscaping in Bloomington. This list is NOT exhaustive, and there are other native species suitable for use not included. For developers and contractors, any plant on the UDO permitted plants list can be used for projects without additional approval. Plant species not listed may still be permitted but must be submitted to the Planning & Transportation Department for approval.



If you're unsure about how to find, choose, or use native plants for your project, we encourage you to consult a local native plant nursery. The INPS Buy Natives Directory curates a list of native plant nurseries & landscapers across Indiana: <https://indiananativeplants.org/landscaping/where-to-buy/>. MC-IRIS has a list of these nurseries found in Monroe County at <http://mc-iris.org/grow-native.htm>. If considering nurseries outside Monroe County, focus on those close to or south of the county: native plants in these areas are more likely to be native and adapted to Monroe County conditions.

## Additional resources on native plants:

- **Additional contacts for information & advice on native plants:**
  - [Joanna Sparks](#) (City Landscaper): [sparkji@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:sparkji@bloomington.in.gov) / 812-349-3497
  - [Linda Thompson](#) (Sr. Environmental Planner): [thompsol@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:thompsol@bloomington.in.gov) / 812-349-3533
  - MC-IRIS: <http://mc-iris.org/contact-us.html> / [mciris2010@gmail.com](mailto:mciris2010@gmail.com)
- Indiana Native Plant Society
  - Photo Index to Indiana Natives: <https://indiananativeplants.org/photo-index/> - includes native plants from all across Indiana; some species may not be native to / well-suited for Bloomington
  - Grow Indiana Natives program: <https://indiananativeplants.org/landscaping/gin-home/>
  - INPS South Central Chapter: <https://indiananativeplants.org/chapters/south-central-chapter/>
- MC-IRIS Native Plant Resources: <http://mc-iris.org/native-plant-links.html>
- Monroe County Rain Garden Guide: [https://www.co.monroe.in.us/egov/documents/1531788419\\_09736.pdf](https://www.co.monroe.in.us/egov/documents/1531788419_09736.pdf)
- Homegrown National Park: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org>



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## What plants should I NOT use?

The Indiana [Terrestrial Plant Rule](#) sets out 44 species of invasive plants that are illegal to sell, gift, barter, exchange, distribute, transport, or introduce in Indiana. These plants cannot be bought or planted in the state. In addition to the Terrestrial Plant Rule, Indiana state law also prohibits the sale and planting of three additional plant species: kudzu (*Pueraria montana*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), and multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*). Federal and Indiana state law also set out noxious weeds that are prohibited or controlled for trade.

[Section 20.04.080\(e\) of the Bloomington Unified Development Ordinance \(UDO\)](#) designates plant species prohibited for use in development within Bloomington. This list of prohibited plants includes all Indiana invasive plants, noxious weeds, and detrimental plants, as well as other invasive & detrimental species not currently regulated under state or federal law. Developers and contractors are **not** permitted to use any UDO prohibited plant species in new development projects.



The UDO does not prohibit homeowners from planting prohibited plant species, and certain UDO-prohibited plants may still be found for sale in Bloomington. Nevertheless, the purchase and planting of any UDO-prohibited plants for landscaping is strongly discouraged, and native plant species should be considered instead. In addition, [Chapter 6.06](#) of the Bloomington Code prohibits property owners from allowing any property within Bloomington to become overgrown with weeds, grass, or noxious plants—which includes all prohibited plant species in the UDO—higher than 8 inches.

Other invasive plants may not be currently regulated but should still be avoided in landscaping. The Indiana Invasive Species Council maintains an official list of all invasive plant species in Indiana (see link in additional resources below).

## Additional resources on invasive plants:

- INDR list of terrestrial invasive plant species restricted under state law: <https://www.in.gov/dnr/6351.htm>
- Indiana Terrestrial Plant Rule fact sheet: [https://www.in.gov/dnr/files/ep-terrestrial\\_plant\\_rule.pdf](https://www.in.gov/dnr/files/ep-terrestrial_plant_rule.pdf)
- USDA federal noxious weed list: <https://plants.usda.gov/java/noxious>
- Indiana Invasive Species Council list of all IN invasive plants: <https://www.entm.purdue.edu/iisc/invasiveplants.html>
- Bloomington UDO: <https://bloomington.in.gov/planning/udo>
- Monroe County Identify & Reduce Invasive Species (MC-IRIS): <http://mc-iris.org>
- Indiana Native Plant Society (INPS): <https://indiananativeplants.org/>
  - Invasive plant overview: <https://indiananativeplants.org/invasive-plants/>
  - “What NOT to Plant”: <https://indiananativeplants.org/landscaping/what-not-to-plant/>
- Southern Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management (SICIM): <https://www.sicim.info/>