



How do I start a native garden? Think sun, soil and water.

1) DETERMINE SUN EXPOSURE

Determine the sun exposure of your potential garden and mark the area (start small). Make a chart and log the sun or shade for a couple of days. Remember that throughout the year the sun exposure will change with the seasons that will affect the amount of direct light or shade. This video gives you some good information: <https://tinyurl.com/2buscdd8>

2) SOIL ANALYSIS

One of the most important steps to ensure plants will thrive is to provide the proper soil conditions in which they will grow. Take soil samples for analysis and information on whether it needs to be amended for the plant material planned for the area. Send soil samples to the CT AG Station for free soil analysis and information on how to bring the soil up to the standard required (<https://tinyurl.com/4937949h>) or for a small fee send soil samples to the UCONN Extension (<https://tinyurl.com/ys79z4dp>). Top menu tabs will guide you through pricing, soil testing, etc. Typically, the Soil pH soil Analysis or the Standard Nutrient Analysis options should be sufficient.

A. LEARN ABOUT GARDEN DESIGN

While you are waiting for the soil analysis results to come back, think about an all-season garden that feeds pollinators for more than one or two seasons (<https://tinyurl.com/4tkdwas9>). This means planting native trees, shrubs and flowers that bloom in the spring, summer and fall while also providing food and habitat in the winter months. Some bees overwinter in hollowed stems of dormant plants and birds feed on the seeds. It is also a good idea to plant multiples of the same plant for the pollinators to see more easily. PPS encourages adding fruit-bearing shrubs for birds. There are many articles on Pollinator Pathway's website under the heading "Your Backyard" (<https://tinyurl.com/5euj9mkx>) to start you off. Use the 'Native Garden Designs' web page (<https://tinyurl.com/bdhzc3uh>) to help you create a plan.

B. PLANT THE PLANTS

Move away any mulch. Dig a hole as deep as the plant container root ball (top of soil in container) and 2-3 times as wide. Water the potted plant. (See Water section below.) Invert the pot and let the plant fall into your hand. Do not pull the plant out of the container. Many plants will be root-bound on the bottom and sides. Loosen the roots so they will grow laterally. Don't be shy about roughing up the roots. Place the plant in the hole and back fill, halfway, compacting the soil. Water. Then continue to backfill until the soil is level with the top of the plant.

3) WATER

If you purchased a shrub or flower from a nursery, chances are the soil is extremely dry. Before you plant the plant, submerge the entire pot with the plant in it in a large bucket. Submerge the container in the bucket of water and wait until there are no more air bubbles coming to the surface. Once planted in the ground, newly planted plants must be watered, at minimum once a week (or more if there is a drought) for several weeks to establish the root system. The rule of thumb is to water about 1" of water per week. Visualize each plant watering as if you had to fill a tuna can (1"). Test the water saturation by digging down about 6-8" to see if the soil is moist. If the soil is still dry, water a little more. Avoid using over-the-head sprinklers. Water the newly planted plants directly at the base. Do not water leaves.