

# Massachusetts Master Gardener Association

## FACT SHEET



**Have Gardening Questions?** The **Master Gardener Help Line Hours** are 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Fridays (all year) as well as Wednesdays (March-November) and Mondays (April-October).  
Phone: 617-933-4929 Email: [mghelpline@masshort.org](mailto:mghelpline@masshort.org).

### Why Go Native?

Native plants evolved in the area in which they are found. These plants have adapted to the climate and soils of our local area, to the extremes of temperature, to water availability, as well as to dealing with native pest or diseases that may attack them. These adaptations can take hundreds to thousands of years to develop. For any habitat in your landscape, there are native plants that have adapted it.

Natives help to maintain the diversity of life in an ecosystem. Our native plants have evolved together with a host of native organisms rely on them for food and shelter while offering in return pollination or a taste for their predators. Plant and animals, including humans, rely on these ecological relationships to survive and maintain a habitable environment. The diversity of these ecosystems may be disrupted when new species are introduced

Introduced species can become invasive. The percentage of introduced species that become invasive is small compared to the number of species introduced in the United States each year. No one would refer to the lilac or apple tree, both from Asia, as invasive, But far too many plants and animals have been brought in before anyone examined their impact. Asian bittersweet climbs any fence or tree or pole, often bringing them down from additional weight after the heavy foliage of the vine has already weakened the structure. Burning bush has a dense root mat that prevents any other plant from gathering food and nutrients where it grows. Its seeds spread into our woods where they outcompete native plants that feed the wildlife. Austrian olive trees spread rapidly eliminating native trees from the Cape.

Invasive species cost us billions.

Introduced species spread by wind, water, and wildlife to areas far beyond where they were planted. Once established, it can take decades to eradicate, if it possible to do so. Invasive plants can destroy our home landscape, clog our waterways, damage food crops. Controlling or eradicating invasive pests costs in the billions each year.

Natives offer hardiness and beauty in your landscape.

You sacrifice nothing by incorporating native plants into your landscape. Although some gardeners will plant only natives, you can combine native and non-native plantings to create a beautiful landscape that will help to accomplish these goals. Educate yourself about invasive plants in your area. Research what is native to your specific location and to your region. Use local resources to help you plan your landscape.

For more information on native and invasive plants:

UMass Extension Introduced Pests Outreach Project – information on invasive species – [www.massnrc.org/pests](http://www.massnrc.org/pests)

USDANatural Resources Conservation Service – information on native and invasive plants in Massachusetts -[www.plants.usda.gov](http://www.plants.usda.gov)

The New England Wildflower Society – information and native plants for sale – [www.newfs.org](http://www.newfs.org)

*The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association is a non-profit organization whose mission is to share knowledge and experience with the public through outreach programs in education, horticulture and gardening; to provide the Master Gardener Training Program to interested members of the public; and to provide graduates of the Master Gardener Training Program with educational and practical opportunities to extend their knowledge and interests in gardening and related topics. <http://www.massmastergardeners.org/>*