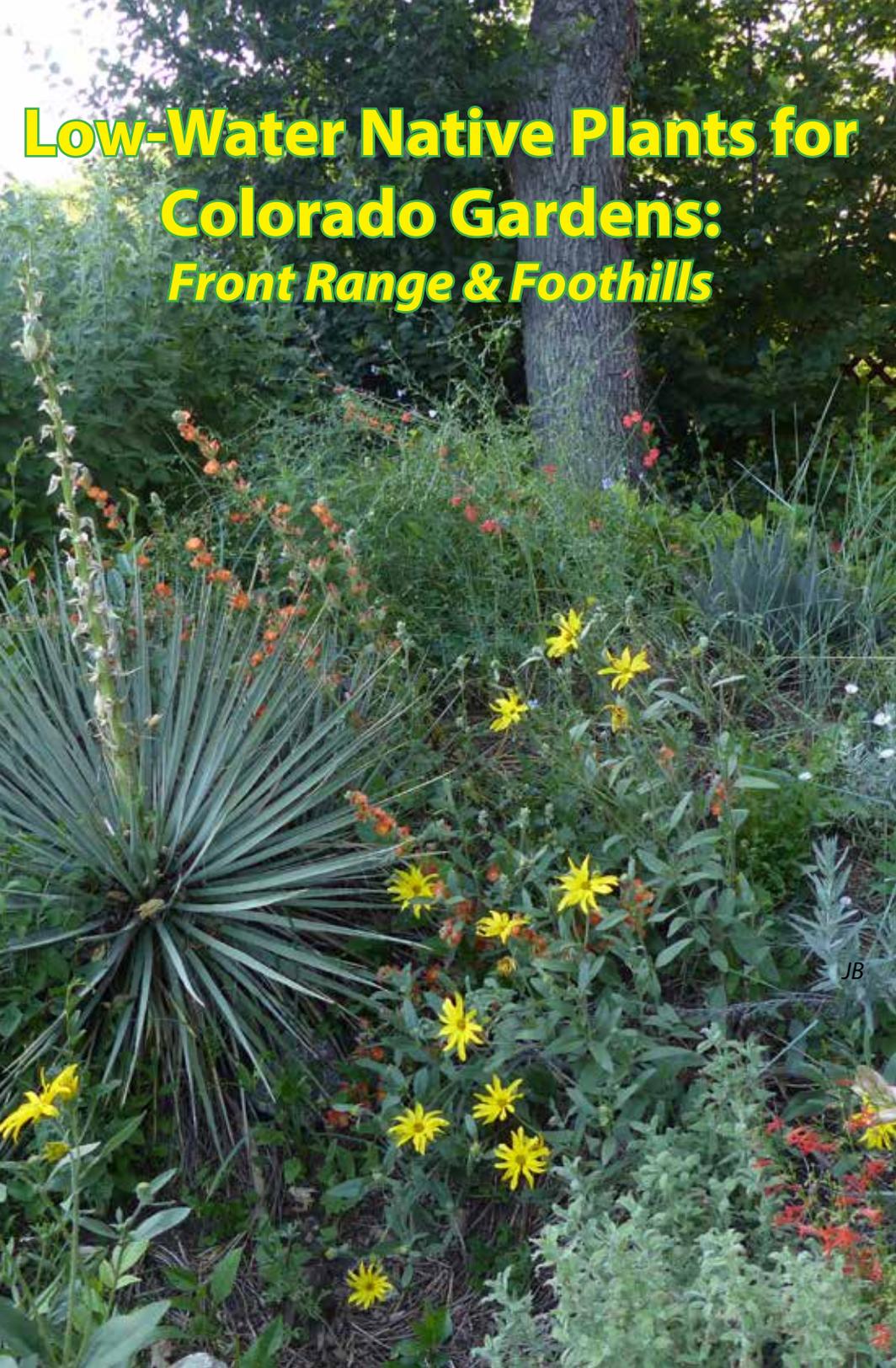
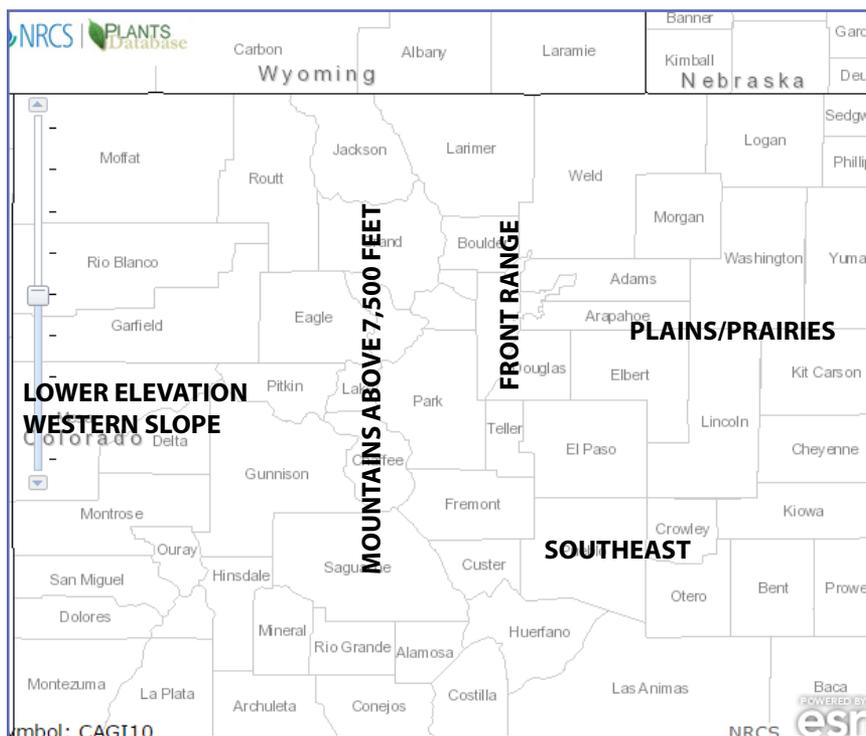


# **Low-Water Native Plants for Colorado Gardens: *Front Range & Foothills***



# Map of Regions



**The Colorado native plant gardening guides cover these 5 regions:**

Plains/Prairie

Front Range/Foothills

Southeastern Colorado

Mountains above 7,500 feet

Lower Elevation Western Slope

This publication was written by the Colorado Native Plant Society Gardening Guide Committee: Irene Shonle, Director, CSU Extension, Gilpin County, Committee Chair; Nick Daniel, Horticulturist, Denver Botanic Gardens; Deryn Davidson, Horticulture Agent, CSU Extension, Boulder County; Susan Crick Smith, President, Front Range Chapter, Wild Ones; Jim Tolstrup, Executive Director, High Plains Environmental Center (HPEC); Jan Loechell Turner, Co-President, Colorado Native Plant Society (CoNPS), Editor and Layout & Design; Amy Yarger, Director of Horticulture, Butterfly Pavilion.

Published by the Colorado Native Plant Society, Ft. Collins, CO

2016 © Colorado Native Plant Society, Butterfly Pavilion, CSU Extension Native Plant Master® Program, Denver Botanic Gardens, High Plains Environmental Center, and the Front Range Chapter of Wild Ones.

*Front Cover: Turner yard . Photo by Jan L Turner*



Garden at the Schultz Residence in Fort Collins. Colors and textures create an eye-catching combination in the Schultz's garden. In the left foreground, the purple flowers of Desert Four O'Clock (*Mirabilis multiflora*) are abundant and beautiful, opening in the afternoon. Each plant can spread to cover a large area (4' x 4') and can drape over terraces. Showy orange butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) attracts a collection of bees and butterflies (and humans!) and can serve as a host plant for larvae of Monarch butterflies. The soft, blue-grey leaves of prairie sage (*Artemisia ludoviciana*) form the perfect backdrop for the butterfly milkweed. JT

## Introduction

This is one in a series of regional native planting guides that are a collaboration of the Colorado Native Plant Society, CSU Extension Native Plant Master® Program, Front Range Wild Ones, the High Plains Environmental Center, Butterfly Pavilion and the Denver Botanic Gardens.

Many people have an interest in landscaping with native plants, and the purpose of this booklet is to help people make the most successful choices. We have divided the state into 5 different regions that reflect different growing conditions and life zones. These are: the plains/prairie, southeastern Colorado, the Front Range/foothills, the mountains above 7,500', and lower elevation Western Slope. Find the area that most closely resembles your proposed garden site for the best gardening recommendations.

## Why Native?

There are many benefits to using Colorado native plants for home and commercial landscapes. They are naturally adapted to Colorado's climates, soils and environmental conditions. This means that by choosing native plants gardeners can work with nature, rather than trying to grow plants that are not suited to our local conditions and may prove to be difficult to work with.

When correctly sited, natives make ideal plants for a sustainable landscape. Native species require less external inputs such as water and fertilizer, and are more resistant to pests and disease when the planting site mimics the plant's native habitat. Outdoor water use accounts for about 55 percent of the residential water use in the Front Range urban area, most of which is used on turf. Planting less-thirsty natives could lessen the burden on our water systems.

Another great reason to go native is to restore habitat. Rapid urbanization in the state is reducing biodiversity (the number of different species found in a given area) as habitat is removed for building and road construction. Research has shown that landscaping with natives on a large, or small scale, helps maintain biodiversity that otherwise would be lost to development. Thousands or millions of gardens planted with natives, even in urban areas can add food, shelter and other important resources for wildlife, including mammals, birds and native pollinators.

Growing native plants does not exclude using adapted non-native plants. There are many non-native plants that are adapted to Colorado's climate and can be used in a native landscape as long as moisture, light and soil requirements are similar. Even if a site has a non-native landscape that requires additional inputs (such as an irrigated landscape on the plains), dry-land native plants can be used in non-irrigated pockets within the non-native landscape. These native "pocket gardens" can be located in areas such as median strips and next to hardscapes that are difficult to irrigate. Note that in years with less than normal rainfall, non-irrigated landscapes may suffer in appearance without supplemental water.

Gardening with native plants also prevents the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. Many noxious weeds were intentionally introduced as garden plants that belatedly were found to escape the confines of the garden and crowd out native plants.

Some communities regulate landscape appearance or the type of plants which may be used. Before initiating any new landscape design, check with local municipalities and/or homeowners' associations, to discover any regulations that may affect your design.



The Turner's yard: A berm with native plants is interesting and colorful. Plains yucca (*Yucca glauca*) on the right is in bloom. The red pineleaf penstemon (*Penstemon pinifolius*) is on the lower right side and behind the yuccas, higher on the berm, are tall blooming stalks of orange globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea parviflora*) flowers and red penstemon (*Penstemon barbatus*). In the lower left is blue flax, that will shed its petals in the afternoon, and the bright yellow flowers of bush sunflower (*Helianthus pumilis*) are in front of the yucca. JLT

Finally, using native plants in landscapes helps provide a special sense of place, celebrating Colorado's uniqueness and beauty, rather than a homogeneous landscape. A garden with native plants feels more harmonious with its surroundings, than a landscape transplanted from another locale.

## Native Plant Gardening in Colorado's Front Range and Foothills

The Front Range and foothills region of Colorado is the area east of the Continental Divide and west of the prairies and plains (see map). It is an area with a high diversity of plant life and growing conditions. Running north-south, it includes the cities of Fort Collins, Greeley,

Loveland, Longmont, Boulder, Golden, Denver and its suburbs, Castle Rock, Colorado Springs, Pueblo and Cañon City will be included in the Southeastern Colorado guide.

The Front Range and foothills include everything from forests and rocky hillsides, to riverbeds, marsh wetlands and short grass prairie. With the wide range of growing conditions and native plants available, depending on where you live, you may be able to represent several vegetative communities within your garden successfully.

The proximity to the Rocky Mountains gives the Front Range and foothills a complex climate. This area can experience high winds, localized heavy rains, high snowfall and/or long periods of drought. It receives less precipitation than the mountains to the west and maintains relatively low humidity.

Soils range from well-drained and rocky with little organic matter, to sticky, heavy clay. It is important to determine what type of soil you have before you begin selecting plants.

There is a great deal of wildlife within this area. Even urban and suburban areas can be home for a variety of songbirds, bees and butterflies. Gardeners in these areas may have to take measures to repel rabbits or squirrels. Areas closer to the foothills may have to protect their plantings from deer or elk.

## Culture and Maintenance

### Soils

Colorado soils, on average, are fairly low in organic matter and high in pH (alkaline). The good news is that native plants usually can be successfully grown in unamended soils. This is because natives do not require nutrient rich, high organic content soil, and can often become overgrown or short lived in such soils. Many native plants, especially those from prairies or the Front Range, will thrive in clay soils. However, some native plants require well-drained soils. To amend clay soils, add 10 percent compost and 15 percent small aggregate (i.e., pea gravel) by volume to clay/clay loam and incorporate into the root zone. Creating a small berm and planting on the top can also be helpful to improve drainage. To amend excessively well-drained sandy or rocky soils, add 3 percent compost by volume. It may be beneficial to test the soil before planting, especially on a larger project. Soil testing kits are available at your local CSU Extension office.

## Maintenance

Native plants often do not need much maintenance; just the usual pruning of dead or diseased material, and cutting back perennials in the spring. Leaving seed heads on the plants in the fall will not only provide a feast for birds, and protect caterpillar eggs and chrysalises, but will increase plant hardiness and winter interest. Native plants typically do not require fertilizer. Some tasks, such as weeding and deadheading, require the same time investment for native plant gardens as for gardens with non-natives.

## Watering

Plants will need to be watered for at least the first season, with the most critical time being the first three weeks after planting. Once they are established, water can be cut back gradually. After establishment, some natives can be taken off irrigation completely. Place plants that have higher water needs nearer the house or other highly used areas. These plants can also be planted in swales (lower areas), or near downspouts for passive water harvesting.



This lawn is being smothered by layers of newspapers covered with several inches of mulch (created from a dead tree that was ground up. JLT

## Limiting/reclaiming turf areas

Although grass lawns are popular, they generally use more resources like water, fertilizers, pesticides, and maintenance (mowing) than a landscape of native plants. Lawns also provide no habitat for pollinators and birds. Native landscapes, on the other hand, are less resource intensive, provide habitat and provide more interest and color. Consider either limiting grass lawns to play, pet, or entertaining areas, or replacing lawns altogether if these spaces are not needed.

To reclaim a space formerly devoted to a lawn, spend some time eradicating all grasses and weeds. Grass is easier to kill when it is green and actively growing in the spring or fall. There are a few options for this. One is to use a glyphosate-based herbicide, another is to cut out all the sod, and a third is to solarize the area. Solarization works best

in the heat of the summer in full-sun areas. Mow the area and remove the clippings, water, place clear plastic on top (burying the edges with soil) and leave it for 4-6 weeks. A final option is to sheet mulch. Cover the area with sheets of cardboard or 12 layers of newspapers. Overlap these materials at least 6 inches so no light penetrates and wet them down to keep them in place. Place 1 inch of compost on top of the barrier layer. Add at least 6 inches more of mulch or compost (grass clippings, straw or leaves). Make sure that all of the grass is smothered because any grass that remains will be difficult to remove if it grows around your new plants.

## Wildlife and Pollinators

Providing habitat for songbirds and pollinators is one of the great pleasures of gardening with native plants. To maximize habitat for pollinators, plant a diversity of plants, and aim to provide the longest possible season of bloom.

Many plants will provide nectar for adult insects, but consider the larval stage in planting too.

Most native insects have specialized relationships

with native plants, and require specific plants to grow from egg to adult. As an example, many butterflies will sip nectar from non-natives, but the eggs need to be laid on specific plants or the caterpillars won't recognize the plant as food.

Birds use native plants for food and shelter, but insects are an overlooked and crucial part of many bird's diets. Far more insects will develop on native plants than exotics, providing food for birds during the critical nesting season. Consider planting a 'thicket' of berry-producing shrubs. If planted in the direction of the prevailing wind, this thicket can also provide a space of calm air for butterflies.



Butterfly on Rocky Mountain Bee Plant  
(*Cleome serrulata*) JLT

## Inventory your Yard/Microclimates

For the best garden, spend some time in the planning stage. Identify where you would like to create a new bed, or replant an existing one. Inventory the areas in your yard for sun and shade, and for areas where moisture accumulates. Consider what areas have easiest access from the house, and if there are views you would like to enhance or block. All of these factors create what are known as microclimates or small, but potentially significant changes in the immediate environment that



Despite its name, swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) does well in dry spots in Jim and Dorothy Borland's yard. The beautiful heads of rose and whitish flowers attract pollinators including Monarchs and other butterflies. It is worth using a hand lens to look at the structure of milkweed flowers. JB

will affect your plants. Knowing these ahead of time will help you make the most of your site and can guide your plant choices.

## Design for Low Maintenance

Native plants can be used to accomplish just about any design style you're looking for using the elements and principles of good design: color, texture, balance, unity, variety, rhythm, line, form, scale. They can be used for anything from formal designs to, the more informal, naturalistic plantings that most people think of when they think native.

Choose species based on the soil, light and water conditions of your site and for the size, shape, texture, and color desired. For a more natural, successful and easily maintained landscape, group species that grow together naturally and have the same cultural requirements. This will improve plant health and appearance and will minimize maintenance.

South-facing areas, with reflected heat, will do best with dryland or desert plants. North-facing areas are cooler, moister and shadier, and will do better with forest-edge type plants. West-facing areas are more similar to south-facing, even if they only get a half day of sun, so this

is a good spot for dryland, prairie, or chaparral plants. The east-facing side is usually the most benign, and can grow a wide variety of plants.

Plants that have higher water needs should be placed near the house for easier watering, or near downspouts or in low-lying areas where they will get extra water.

Be sure to be vigilant for weeds, especially in the first few years of planting, so they don't take over the desirable vegetation. Plant thickly enough that the plants become a living mulch.

## Suggested Reading

*\*Items available from the CoNPS Store at the time this booklet was published are marked with an asterisk\*. Others may be out-of-print and can be obtained from Amazon or the public library.*

Brune\*, Rick. 1991. *The Prairie Garden*. Colorado Native Plant Society.

Busco\*, Janice and Nancy Morin. 2010. *Native Plants for High Elevation Western Gardens*. Fulcrum Publishing.

Dorn\*, Robert and Jane Dorn. 2007. *Growing Native Plants of the Rocky Mountain Area*. (available from CoNPS Bookstore as a CD).

Elliefson, Connie and David Winger. 2013. *Xeriscape Colorado*.

Flora of North America Association. 2006. *Flora of North America*.

Gardening with Native Plants. 2016. Colorado Native Plant Society [website]. <https://conps.org/gardening-with-native-plants/>

Hayes\*, Rhona Fleming. 2015. *Pollinator Friendly Gardening, gardening for bees, butterflies and other pollinators*. Voyageur Press.

Nold, Robert. 2008. *High and Dry: Gardening with Cold-Hardy Dryland Plants*. Timber Press.

*Plant Materials for Pollinators and Other Beneficial Insects in Eastern Utah and Western Colorado*. [website]. [http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CO/COPMTN\\_75\\_130711\\_comp.pdf](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CO/COPMTN_75_130711_comp.pdf)

Tallamy\*, Douglas. 2009. *Bringing Nature Home*. Timber Press.

Xerces Society\*. 2011. *Attracting Native Pollinators*. Storey

## Plant List

The plants for this guide were selected by experienced gardeners, with further input from other local gardeners from the Colorado Native Plant Society. Our goal was to choose plants that would be relatively easy to find in nurseries and seed catalogs.

Check the CoNPS website for native plant sales put on by CoNPS or other organizations.

For a listing of nurseries and seed companies in Colorado that sell native plants, look for the “Native Plant vendors” list on the Colorado Native Plant Society (CoNPS) website at <http://conps.org/gardening-with-native-plants/>. When you go to a nursery, be sure to have the scientific name with you to make sure you are purchasing the correct species.

### Key to Chart

The chart on the following pages contains a list of plants, *listed alphabetically by scientific name (column 2 of the chart)*, that are native to Colorado and do well in Front Range gardens. The scientific names are from *Flora of North America* (FNA). An asterisk indicates it is local to another part of the state but will do well in your Front Range garden. Not all the plants illustrated in this guide are in the chart but the scientific names are given so you can find them in a nursery. If you have questions, contact CoNPS or one of the other organizations that collaborated to produce this guide.

frt/birds,wl = fruit for birds and wildlife

hp = host plant

hp/hm = host plant for hawk moth

np/bee,btf = nectar and pollen for bees and butterflies

np/bee,btf,o = nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators

n/hb = nectar for hummingbirds

n/hm=nectar for hawkmoths

p/bees = pollen for bees

ss/birds = seeds and shelter for birds

s/birds = seeds for birds



### Colorado Native Plant Society Mission Statement

The Colorado Native Plant Society is dedicated to furthering the knowledge, appreciation and conservation of native plants and habitats of Colorado through education, stewardship and advocacy.

Visit CoNPS website at <http://www.conps.org>

Common Name	Scientific Name	Size H x W	Water
<b>GROUNDCOVERS</b>			
Pussytoes (perennial)	<i>Antennaria parvifolia</i>	2" x 6"	low-med
Wine Cups (perennial)	<i>Callirhoe involucrata</i>	4"x10"	low-med
Spreading Daisy (perennial)	<i>Erigeron divergens</i>	2" x 16"	low
Sulphur Flower (perennial)	<i>Eriogonum umbellatum</i>	10" x 12"	low
Creeping Mahonia (shrub)	<i>Mahonia repens (Berberis repens)</i>	12" x 12"	med.
Gro-Low Fragrant Sumac (shrub)	<i>Rhus trilobata 'Gro-Low'</i> ( <i>R. aromatica 'Gro-Low'</i> )	4' x 3'	low
<b>PERENNIALS</b>			
Common Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium (lanatum)</i>	18" x 18"	low-med
Fringed Sage	<i>Artemisia frigida</i>	12" x 18"	low
Prairie Sage	<i>Artemisia ludoviciana</i>	18" x 18"	low
Showy Milkweed	<i>Asclepias speciosa</i>	30" x 12"	med
Butterfly Milkweed*	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	18" x 18"	low
Chocolate Flower*	<i>Berlandiera lyrata</i>	18" x 18"	low
Harebells	<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	12" x 6"	low
Purple Prairie Clover	<i>Dalea purpurea</i>	24" x 18"	low
Blanketflower	<i>Gaillardia aristata</i>	12" x 12"	medium
Bush Sunflower	<i>Helianthus pumilus</i>	20" x 18"	low
Gayfeather	<i>Liatris punctata</i>	24" x 12"	low
Blue Flax	<i>Linum lewisii</i>	18" x 12"	low
Star Flower/Blazing-Star	<i>Mentzelia decapetala</i>	28" x 18"	low
Desert Four O'Clock*	<i>Mirabilis multiflora</i>	18" x 48"	low
Bee Balm/Horsemint	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	24" x 24"	low-med
White-tufted Evening-Primrose	<i>Oenothera caespitosa</i>	6" x 12"	low
Howard's Evening-Primrose	<i>Oenothera howardii</i>	6" x 12"	low
Side-bells Penstemon	<i>Penstemon secundiflorus</i>	20" x 12"	low
Rocky Mountain Penstemon	<i>Penstemon strictus</i>	30" x 24"	low
Blue Mist Penstemon	<i>Penstemon virens</i>	12" x 12"	low
Prairie Coneflower	<i>Ratibida columnifera</i>	18" x 12"	low
Black-eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	24" x 7"	low
Pitcher Sage	<i>Salvia azurea</i>	36" x 36"	low
Canada Goldenrod	<i>Solidago canadensis</i>	30" x 18"	medium
Scarlet Globemallow	<i>Sphaeralcea coccinea</i>	10" x 10"	low

	<b>Exposure</b>	<b>Flower Color</b>	<b>Bloom Time</b>	<b>Wildlife Value</b>
d	sun/part shade	cream, pink	spring-summer	np/bee,btf
d	sun	magenta	spring-summer	np/bee,btf
	sun	white	spring-summer	np/bee,btf
	sun/part shade	yellow	summer	np/btfl
	sun/part shade	yellow	spring	np/bee,btf
	sun	yellow	spring	ss/birds
d	sun/part shade	white	summer	np/bee,btf
	sun	gray-green lvs.	summer	p/bee,s/birds
	sun	gray-green lvs.	summer	p/bee,s/birds
	sun	pink	summer	np/bee,btf hp - monarch larva
	sun	orange	summer	np/bee,btf,o hp- monarch larva
	sun	yellow	summer	np/bee,btf
	sun/part shade	blue	summer	np/bee,btf
	sun	purple	summer	np/bee,btf
	sun	yellow & red	summer-fall	np/bee,btf
	sun	yellow	summer-fall	np/bee,btf, s/birds
	sun	pink-purple	summer-fall	np/bee,btf
	sun/part shade	blue	spring-summer	np/bee,btf,o
	sun	white	summer	np/moths
	sun/part shade	magenta	summer	n/hm, n/hb
d	sun/part shade	pink-lav	summer	np/bee,btf, n/hb
	sun	white	summer	n/hm, hp/hm
	sun	yellow	summer	n/bee,moths
	sun	lav-pink	spring-summer	np/bee,btf, n/hb
	sun/part shade	blue-purple	summer	np/bee,btf, n/hb
	sun/part shade	blue-purple	spring-summer	np/bee,btf, n/hb
	sun	yellow	summer-fall	np/bee,btf s/birds
	sun/part shade	yellow	summer	np/bee,btf, seeds/birds
	sun/part shade	blue-purple	late summer	n/hb, btfl
	sun	yellow	late summer	np/bee,btf
	sun	red-orange	summer	np/bee

Common Name	Scientific Name	Size H x W	Water	Ex
<b>CACTI &amp; SUCCULENTS</b>				
Yellow Nipple Cactus	<i>Escobaria missouriensis</i>	4" x 4"	low	su
Pink Nipple Cactus	<i>Escobaria vivipara</i>	4" x 4"	low	su
Prickly Pear	<i>Opuntia macrorhiza</i>	5" x 18"	low	su
Plains Yucca	<i>Yucca glauca</i>	2' x 2'	low	su
<b>GRASSES</b>				
Indian Rice Grass	<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>	24" x 12"	low	su
Side-Oats Grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	24" x 12"	low	su
Blue Grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	18" x 12"	low	su
Little Bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	24" x 18"	low	su
<b>SHRUBS</b>				
Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	12' x 6'	low-med	su
Silvery Leadplant	<i>Amorpha canescens</i>	4' x 3'	low	su
Mountain Mahogany	<i>Cercocarpus montanus</i>	5' x 4'	low	su
Rubber Rabbitbrush	<i>Ericameria nauseosa</i> ( <i>Chrysothamnus nauseosus</i> )	4' x 3'	low	su
Apache Plume*	<i>Fallugia paradoxa</i>	5' x 5'	low	su
Western Sandcherry	<i>Prunus besseyi</i>	4' x 4'	low	su
Golden Currant	<i>Ribes aureum</i>	5' x 4'	medium	su
Wax Currant	<i>Ribes cereum</i>	4' x 3'	low	su
Smooth Sumac	<i>Rhus glabra</i>	6' x 4'	low-med	su
Skunkbush Sumac	<i>Rhus trilobata</i>	4' x 3'	low	su
Western Wild Rose	<i>Rosa woodsii</i>	3' x 4'	low-med	su
Snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpos occidentalis</i>	4' x 4'	low-med	su
<b>TREES</b>				
Rocky Mountain Maple	<i>Acer glabrum</i>	20' x 12'	med	su
Rocky Mountain Juniper	<i>Juniperus scopulorum</i>	15' x 8'	low	su
Piñon Pine	<i>Pinus edulis</i>	25' x 15'	low	su
Ponderosa Pine	<i>Pinus ponderosa</i>	70' x 30'	low	su
Gambel Oak	<i>Quercus gambelii</i>	25' x 12'	low	su

<b>Exposure</b>	<b>Flower Color</b>	<b>Bloom Time</b>	<b>Wildlife Value</b>
n	yellow	summer	np/bee, fruit
n	pink	summer	np/bee, green fruit
n	yellow-apricot	summer	np/bee, red fruit
n	cream	summer	hp- pronuba moth
n	lacy tan infr.	summer	seeds-birds, hp-skipper
n	green	summer	seeds-birds
n	green	summer	seeds-birds
n	bluish foliage	summer	seeds /birds, hp/skipper
n-part shade	white	spring	frt/birds, wl
n-part shade	purple	summer	np/bee
n-part shade	cream	spring	cover/birds, deer browse
n	yellow	fall	cover/birds, np/bee,btf,o
n-part shade	white-pinkish	summer	np/bee
n	white	spring	np/bee, frt/birds
n	yellow	spring	n/hb frt/birds, wl
n	pink-cream	spring	frt/birds, wl
n-part shade	green-yellow	summer	ss/birds
n	yellow	spring	ss/birds
n-part shade	pink	spring-summer	np/bee, frt/birds
n-part shade	pink	summer	np/bee,btf; frt/birds
n	inconspicuous	spring	ss/birds
n	inconspicuous	summer	ss/birds
n	inconspicuous	summer	ss/birds
n	inconspicuous	summer	ss/birds, wldlf
n-part shade	inconspicuous		acorns/birds, wldlf, hp/ CO hair-streak btf

## PHOTO GALLERY OF PLANTS

These are arranged by bloom times. The colorful berries appear after the flowers so may appear during another season. An asterisk indicates it is local to another part of the state but will do well in your Front Range garden.

### GROUNDCOVERS



#### Low-Gro Skunkbush

*Rhus trilobata* 'Low-Gro'

Red berries taste lemony. Tri-lobate leaves.



#### Creeping Mahonia

*Mahonia repens*

Fragrant flowers, blue berries, holly-like leaves. Spring (evergreen)



#### Wine Cups

*Callirhoe involucrata*

Showy red-purple flowers.

Spring - Summer



#### Spreading Daisy

*Erigeron divergens*

White daisies with soft green foliage.

Summer.

## GROUNDCOVERS (Continued)



### **Pussytoes**

*Antennaria parvifolia*

Soft gray-green leaves, white to pink furry flowers. Spring- Summer



### **Sulphur Flower**

*Eriogonum umbellatum*

Butterflies love the long-blooming yellow flowers. Birds eat the seeds. Summer

## PERENNIALS



### **Blue Mist Penstemon**

*Penstemon virens*

Beautiful sky blue flowers, glossy green leaves. Spring



### **Side-Bells Penstemon**

*Penstemon secundiflorus*

Large pink to lavender flowers, waxy grey-green leaves. Spring



**Blue Flax**

*Linum lewisii*

Beautiful, sky-blue petals on wiry stems fall off in the afternoon and cover the ground like blue confetti. The next morning, new flowers bloom. Spring-Summer



**Scarlet Globemallow**

*Sphaeralcea coccinea* - smaller

Showy scarlet to orange cup-shaped flowers. Early summer.



**Beebalm**

*Monarda fistulosa*

Bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds love the large flower heads. Leaves smell like oregano . Summer



**Evening Primrose**

*Oenothera caespitosa*

Fragrant, white flowers open late in the day and attract moths. After blooming they wilt and turn a pretty shade of pink. Summer.



**Showy Milkweed**

*Asclepias speciosa*

Tall plant with large, fragrant balls of attractive pink flowers. Attracts bees and is the host plant for the Monarch butterfly. Large, showy leaves look like smaller, lighter version of rubber tree leaves. Summer.



**Butterfly Milkweed\***

*Asclepias tuberosa*

Bright orange-yellow balls of flowers attract many species of bees and many different butterflies. Host plant for Monarch butterfly. Summer.



**Fringed Sage**

*Artemisia frigida*

**Prairie Sage**

*Artemisia ludoviciana*

These small sages are used for their beautifully colored and textured foliage rather than for their inconspicuous flowers. Both of these species can spread through underground stems (rhizomes). They are not related to the sage used in cooking.



**Rocky Mountain Penstemon**

*Penstemon strictus*

Tall with beautiful spikes of purple flowers. Reproduces easily. Planted in mass, it steals the scene. Summer.



**Common Yarrow**

*Achillea millefolium*

Clusters of small white flowers and ferny leaves, giving texture to the garden. Spreads by rhizomes (underground stems). Summer



**Howard's Evening-Primrose**

*Oenothera howardii*

Glossy deep-green leaves, large, showy, yellow flowers that wilt and turn orange after blooming. Summer.



**Harebells**

*Campanula rotundifolia*

Purplish-blue, delicate nodding flowers seem to glow in the evening light. Delicate stems. They are the bluebells of Scotland and are very adaptable. Summer.



**Desert Four O'Clock**

*Mirabilis multiflora*

Large and sprawling, Desert 4 O'Clock becomes covered with purple flowers in the afternoon. Very showy and quite drought-tolerant. Summer.



**Black-eyed Susan**

*Rudbeckia hirta*

Yellow sunflowers with the dark centers attract butterflies and songbirds. Biennial. Summer.



**Bush Sunflower**

*Helianthus pumilus*

Common in the Front Range, this medium-sized sunflower provides abundant yellow flower heads for a variety of pollinators. The leaves feel like sandpaper! Summer-Fall.



**Purple Prairie Clover**

*Dalea purpurea*

Long spikes of purple pea flowers attract bees and butterflies. Summer.



**Blanket Flower**

*Gaillardia aristata*

Spectacular yellow flowers with orange-red centers. A "must have" for any garden! Summer-Fall



**Canada Goldenrod**

*Solidago canadensis*

These showy summer bloomers should not cause allergies because they are insect-pollinated rather than wind-pollinated.



**Prairie Coneflower**

*Ratibida columnifera*

Long-blooming flowers attract butterflies. Dark cone protrudes from center of the flower head and is surrounded by drooping yellow to maroon "petals" (ray flowers). Drought tolerant. Summer-Fall



### **Gayfeather**

*Liatris punctata*

This spectacular late summer to fall-blooming plant is worth the wait with its showy spikes of pink-purple flowers that attract bees and butterflies.



### **Chocolate Flower\***

*Berlandiera lyrata*

Native to southeastern-Colorado, chocolate flower has dark-centered yellow flower heads that smell like hot chocolate. Drought-tolerant, needs hot microclimate. Summer.



### **Pitcher Sage**

*Salvia azurea*

The pretty blue flowers of this mint family plant appear in late summer.



### **Blazing Star**

*Mentzelia decapetala*

Large, spectacular flowers with a fireworks of stamens open in the evening, attracting moths.

## **CACTI AND SUCCULENTS**

These two cacti are small so fit them into a protected area in a rock garden where you can enjoy their spectacular flowers when they bloom.



### **Yellow Nipple Cactus**

*Escobaria missouriensis*

Small, round cactus that can grow as a solitary plant or form a colony. Small, round red fruits follow flowers. Summer-Fall



### **Pink Nipple Cactus**

*Escobaria vivipara*

This small, ball-shaped cactus shrinks back to the ground after flowering. Green fruit. Summer.



### Prickly Pear Cactus

*Opuntia macrorhiza*, *O. polyacantha*, *O. phaeacantha*

Watch out for the barbed hairs (glochids) as well as the spines on prickly pears.

The flowers in the summer are worth the danger, but plant away from paths. For tasty jelly, use the fleshy red fruit of *O. phaeacantha*.



### Plains Yucca

*Yucca glauca*

Although the leaf tips are sharp, yuccas make a wonderful accent in your native plant garden and are very drought-tolerant. Even when not in bloom, they are spectacular. Banana Yucca\* (*Yucca baccata*) has wider leaves than *Yucca glauca*.

## GRASSES



### Blue Grama

*Bouteloua gracilis*

Seedheads look like false eye lashes. Can be used as an accent plant or for a low-mow lawn. State grass of Colorado.



### Indian Rice Grass

*Achnatherum hymenoides*

Delicate seedheads are decorative and attract birds. Mixes nicely with wildflower plantings.



### Side-Oats Grama

*Bouteloua curtipendula*

Seedheads are on one side like flags.



### Little Bluestem

*Schizachyrium scoparium*

Pretty reddish autumn and winter color. Wispy, upright grower.

## SHRUBS



### **Wax Currant**

*Ribes cereum*

Tubular pink flowers in the spring are followed by edible red-orange berries.



### **Golden Currant**

*Ribes aureum*

Showy yellow trumpet flowers in spring are followed by edible red berries. Grows quickly, can be cut back. One variety (*Ribes aureum* var. *odoratum*) smells like cloves.



### **Western Sandcherry**

*Prunus besseyi*

Masses of fragrant white flowers cover this shrub in early spring. Black berries attract birds. Red fall color. The selection "Pawnee Buttes" is a low-growing shrub that can be used as a ground-cover.



### **Serviceberry**

*Amelanchier alnifolia*

Attractive shrub to small tree has white flowers, edible purple berries. Beautiful red and yellow fall colors.



### **Mountain Mahogany**

*Cercocarpus montanus*

This craggy foothills shrub has character. It has spectacular coiled, furry seedheads that catch the light.



### **Wood's Rose**

*Rosa woodsii*

Lovely pink flowers adorn this prickly plant that can sucker aggressively. Attractive red rose hips supply winter food for wildlife.



### **Snowberry**

*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*

Pink to white tubular to bell-shaped flowers followed by white, inedible berries. Good for dry shade. Can sucker aggressively.



### **Apache Plume\***

*Fallugia paradoxa*

Occurring near Pueblo and in the San Luis Valley, it adapts to the more northern areas of the Front Range. Showy white flowers and even showier pink seedheads steal the show!



### **Silvery Leadplant**

*Amorpha canescens*

Spikes of dark purple flowers attract pollinators. Small pinnate leaves. Drought tolerant.



### **Rabbitbrush**

*Ericameria nauseosa*

*(Chrysothamnus nauseosus)*

Attractive green to blue-grey foliage, covered with beautiful gold flowers in fall. Nice for structure in the winter. Spreads easily.



### **Three-leaf Sumac**

*Rhus trilobata*

A common and desirable shrub of the foothills with trifoliate leaves. It is not poisonous and displays pretty red berries that can be used to make lemonade or as a tart snack. Yellow-orange fall color. There is also a 'Gro-low' cultivar.



### **Smooth Sumac**

*Rhus glabra*

Beautiful shrub with striking red fall color. It is not poisonous. In nature, it is low-growing but can become tall in the garden. It suckers so it can become aggressive in the garden.

## TREES

The large, deciduous, broad-leaved trees of our region, like cottonwoods, tend to grow in riparian areas. They are not low-water trees. The trees on this page grow in the foothills and are more drought-tolerant than riparian trees. Except for ponderosa pine, which grows quite tall, the trees on this page are usually tall shrubs to small trees.



### Gambel Oak

*Quercus gambelii*

Gambel oak is a survivor, suckering to form colonies in reaction to forest fires. This handsome, slow-growing tree is an important wildlife plant, providing acorns for winter food. Nice orange-yellow fall color.



### Rocky Mountain Juniper

*Juniperus scopulorum*

Robins and Townsend solitaires enjoy the blue “berries” (actually, cones) of the female plant. These junipers are usually dioecious with separate male and female plants. The female plants have the berries and the males have the pollen cones that can cause allergies. Very drought tolerant.



### Rocky Mountain Maple

*Acer glabrum*

The leaves of this large bushy shrub to short tree are a smaller version of the classic maple leaf and samaras.



### Piñon Pine

*Pinus edulis*

Piñon (pinyon) pine occurs in the southern part of the Front Range, from Colorado Springs south. This slow-growing tree produces piñon nuts (seeds), an important wildlife food that is also enjoyed by humans.



### Ponderosa Pine *Pinus ponderosa*

Ponderosa pines grow in the foothills and mountains. These tall trees with broad crowns need room in the garden. In the warm sun, their orangish trunks can smell like vanilla or butterscotch.

# Landscape Design #1

This landscape design, which is 15' by 15' and approximately 22' diagonally, fits nicely into the corner of a yard. The leadplants serve as the tallest plant in the corner, contributing spikes of purple flowers when in bloom. The purple is repeated nearby by the purple prairie clover. The pale, fuzzy blue-grey leaves of prairie sage provide a soft muted color throughout the year as do the low, grey pussytoes at the front of the garden and the beautiful flowers of blue-mist penstemon that are abundant in spring and early summer. The native yarrow has flat-crowned clusters of small white flowers and ferny leaves with the white flower color echoed in the front by white-tufted evening primrose and in front of the prairie sage by the spreading daisies. The yellow chocolate flowers like hot chocolate and, next to them, the flowers of side-oats grama wave like small flags along the stem of the plant. The lovely blue flowers of flax bloom in the morning, shedding their petals like confetti on the ground by the afternoon.



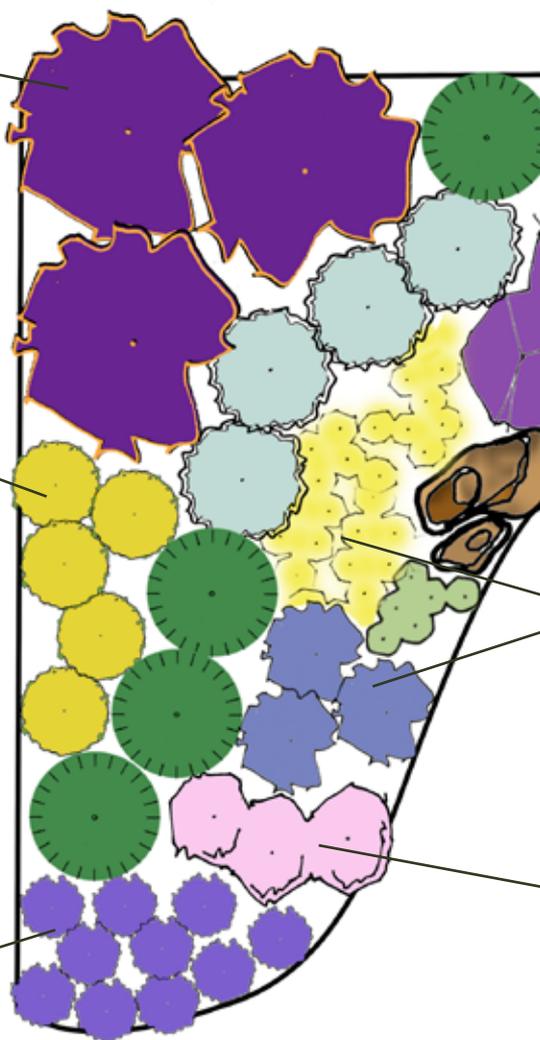
Leadplant *Amorpha canescens*



Prairie Sage *Artemisia ludoviciana*



Blue Mist Penstemon *Penstemon virens*



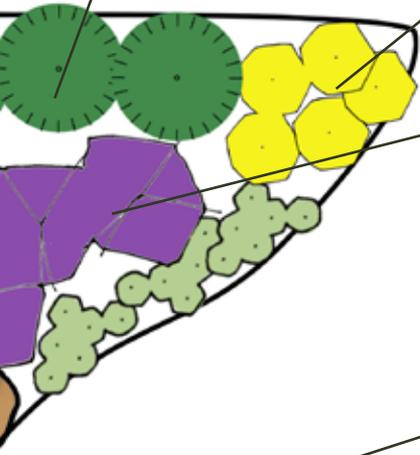
corner  
flowers  
le-  
green  
re  
white  
ing  
smells  
ng the  
like



Side-Oats Grama Grass  
*Bouteloua curtipendula*



Chocolate Flower *Berlandiera Lyra*



Purple Prairie Clover *Dalea purpurea*



Blue Flax *Linum lewisii*



Spreading Daisy *Erigeron divergens*



Evening-Primrose *Oenothera caespitosa*

# Landscape Design #2

This rectangular native garden is 15' by 5'. The rabbitbrush, pussytoes, and little bluestem summer an



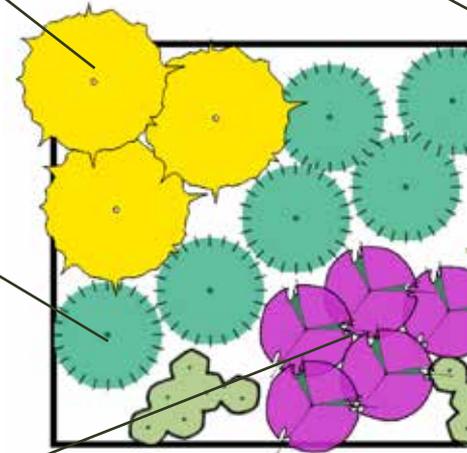
Goldenrod *Solidago* spp.



Globemallow *Sphaeralcea* spp.



Little Bluestem  
*Schizachyrium scoparium*



Gayfeather  
*Liatris punctata*



Chocolate Flower  
*Berlandieria lyrata*

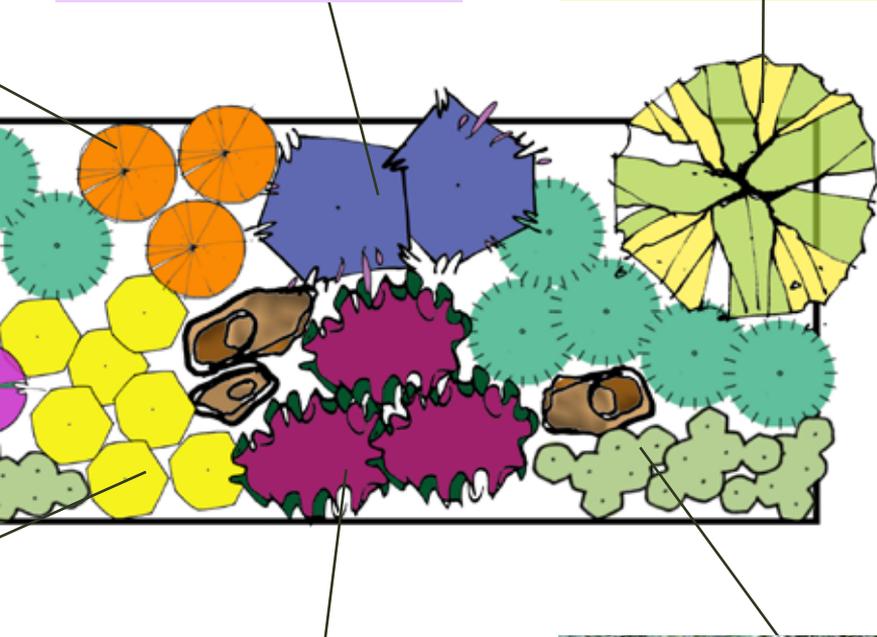
...m give year round interest and winter structure. The flowers give a beautiful combination of d fall colors.



Rocky Mountain Penstemon  
*Penstemon strictus*



Rabbitbrush  
*Ericameria nauseosa*



Wine Cups  
*Callirhoe involucrata*



Pussytoes  
*Antennaria* spp.

## PHOTO GALLERY OF LANDSCAPE IDEAS

**Jim and Dorothy Borland's Yard** in Denver is the envy of any native plant gardener. Their front yard is a beautiful example of the mix of colors and textures provided by Colorado's native plants.



In the foreground, the showy yellow flowers of Missouri evening-primrose (*Oenothera missouriensis*) turn pale orange after blooming. Blanketflower (*Gaillardia aristata*), several species of yucca, and Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*), a shrub covered with white blossoms, create a feast for the eyes.



**Carol English & Dave Elin's Rock Garden** is nestled into the rocky foothills in Morrison. Carol and Dave have artistically carved a number of rock gardens and paths that show off native shrubs, perennials (especially penstemons), evening-primroses, and cacti. Rock terraces and a variety of hardscapes show off the plants.



DE

**Charlie and Jan Turner's native and xeriscape garden** in Golden shows off the purple flowers of Rocky Mountain penstemon (*Penstemon strictus*) and blanket flower (*Gaillardia aristata*) with its bright yellow ray flowers and orange center of disk flowers. In front of the fence on the left side of the photo is a smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*) that turns brilliant red in the autumn. A piñon pine can be seen behind the penstemons. To the right of the penstemon is a clump of sulphur flower (*Eriogonum umbellatum*).. JLT



CT

Showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*) is a host plant for Monarch butterflies. The plant is a beautiful and fragrant native that also attracts bees. JLT

**Rick Brune's Prairie Garden** in Lakewood is a riot of color. He created a prairie of native plants on his large lot and it is next to impossible to capture the beauty and size of his prairie garden in photos. Some plants take turns blooming, and when they do they may bloom in profusion!

Top photo: Wallflowers (*Erysimum asperum*), *Gilia pinnatifida*, orange paintbrush (*Castilleja integra*), and *Penstemon angustifolius* are the most obvious plants in the photo. RB



Above: Prairie coneflower (*Ratibida columnifera*) and orange paintbrush (*Castilleja integra*) steal the show. Below left: orange paintbrush and wallflower (*Erysimum asperum*). RB

Below: Scarlet globemallow (*Sphaeralcea coccinea*) RB



**The High Plains Environmental Center (HPEC) in Loveland** has a number of native plant gardens. JT



The interesting colors and textures of native plants create a garden that delights visitors and attracts pollinators. In the foreground are prairie sage (*Artemisia ludoviciana*), Hairy goldenaster (*Heterotheca villosa*), rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa*), tall evening primrose, and Rocky Mountain beeplant (*Cleome serrulata*). Blue grama grass, hyssop or hummingbird mint (*Agastache* sp.), chocolate flower, skullcap, tansy aster, and giant sacaton are in the background.

**Dave Sutherland's front yard**, is a drought-tolerant garden occupying a corner between the driveway and the street. JLT



**The Butterfly Pavilion's Discovery Garden** has sunflowers (left) and rabbitbrush (right) for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators.



Photo credits indicated by initials:

- (AY) Amy Yarger
- (CT) Charlie Turner
- (DD) Deryn Davidson
- (DE) Dave Elin
- (IS) Irene Shonle
- (JB) Jim Borland
- (JLT) Jan Turner
- (JT) Jim Tolstrup
- (LH) Linda Hellow
- (ND) Nick Daniel
- (RB) Rick Brune
- (SS) Susan Crick Smith



DENVER BOTANIC  
GARDENS



Colorado  
State  
University  
Extension  
NATIVE PLANT MASTER®

Wild Ones  
NATIVE PLANTS. NATURAL LANDSCAPES  
FRONT RANGE

Published by the Colorado Native Plant Society, P.O. Box 200, Fort Collins, CO 80522  
[www.conps.org](http://www.conps.org)