



Lawns to Legumes

Native Plants, Cultivars, and Non-Natives

With a few exceptions, only Minnesota native plants are reimbursable under the Lawns to Legumes grant. Non-native, cultivar, and hybrid plants are not reimbursable. Learn how to tell the difference below!

What is a native plant?

Native plants are plant species that have been growing in Minnesota for a long time. They have beneficial relationships with their local weather, plants, pollinators, and soil. Native pollinators have evolved alongside native plants, and rely on them for nectar and pollen. Many native plants have deep roots that help clean pollutants from soil and make it healthier over time.

Native plant example: Wild yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)



What is a cultivar?

Cultivars, 'nativars', and hybrids are all plants that have been bred by humans to look or grow a specific way. Even if they began as native plants, their modified colors, shapes, scents, and bloom times make it harder for pollinators to recognize them as food, and it is likely they provide less nutritional value to pollinators than true native plants.

Cultivar example: 'Pink Grapefruit' *Achillea millefolium* (A cultivar of yarrow)

What is a non-native plant?

Non-native plants are plant species that have been brought by humans into an environment they are not naturally or historically found in. Because non-native plants have not had time to evolve and adapt within these new environments, they are less beneficial to pollinators and ecosystem health compared to native plants.

Non-native plant example: Zinnia flowers (*Zinnia elegans*)



Note: Are you installing a pollinator lawn or planting trees or shrubs? These projects can use certain non-native and cultivar plants.

See the **Eligible Expenses Guide** for the list of exceptions.



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Identifying native plants vs cultivars/hybrids

- **Native plants** have a common name and a scientific name. The common name is usually two words. The scientific name is two words and in Latin, and often in italics.
 - Some native plants have several common names, for example, Bee Balm and Wild Bergamot.
- **Check plant tags!**
 - **Cultivars** usually have an extra name added onto the common and scientific name, often trademarked or in quotes. The extra name is often catchy or fanciful.
 - **Hybrids** also often have an extra name and/or an "X" in their name.

Examples

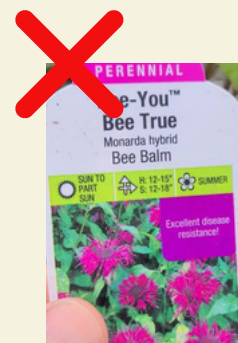
- Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*): This is a **native plant**. Wild Bergamot is the common name and *Monarda fistulosa* is the scientific name.
- Bee Balm *Monarda didyma* 'Raspberry Wine': This is a **cultivar**. The 'Raspberry Wine' gives it away.
- Bee-You™ Bee True *Monarda* hybrid Bee Balm: This is a **hybrid**.



Native
Wild Bergamot
(*Monarda fistulosa*)



Cultivar
Bee Balm *Monarda didyma*
'Raspberry Wine'



Hybrid
Bee-You™ Bee True
Monarda hybrid Bee Balm

Shopping Tips

- When possible, shop from a nursery that specializes in native plants. Check out our [Minnesota Native Plant Nurseries and Retailers page](#) for recommendations.
- Study plant tags carefully to make sure you are not purchasing cultivars or hybrids (see the next page for some plant tag examples!)
- Cultivars of native trees are very common. Lawns to Legumes does reimburse some cultivars, see the [Eligible Expenses Guide](#) for the list of exceptions. Shop from a native plant nursery or check to see if your county or city hosts an annual native tree sale.
- Bring a list of the plants you want to purchase to the store. Include the common and scientific name. If the name on the plant tag has extra words, often quoted or trademarked, that means it is a cultivar.
- If you're not sure whether a plant is a native plant or a cultivar, ask the nursery staff. You can also email the L2L Helpline (l2lhelp@bluethumb.org) with the plant tag picture or a webpage link, and program staff can confirm whether or not the plant is reimbursable.

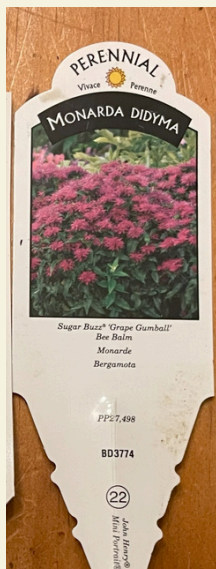


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Spot the Native Plant!

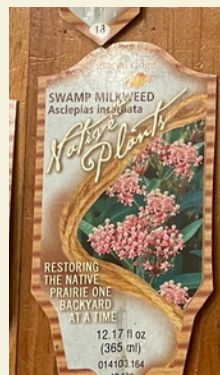
Sometimes it can be tricky to tell a native plant from a cultivar. Look at the native and cultivar plant tags below. Notice that some cultivar plant tags have their extra name in quotes or trademark symbols, and others do not. The extra name can also be located in different places on the tag. For more practice, check out the [Lawns to Legumes online course](#).



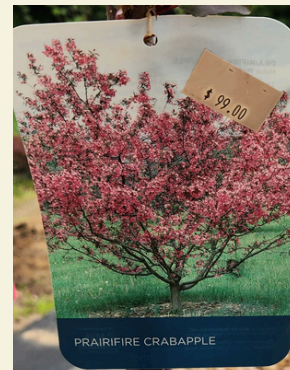
'Grape Gumball' Monarda
Cultivar ✗



Rattlesnake Master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*)
MN Native ✓



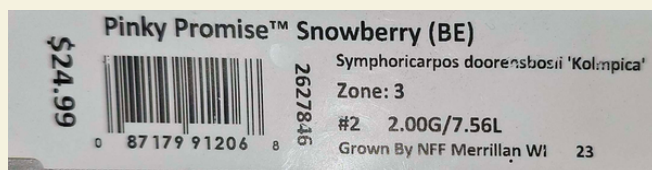
Swamp Milkweed
(*Asclepias incarnata*)
MN Native ✓



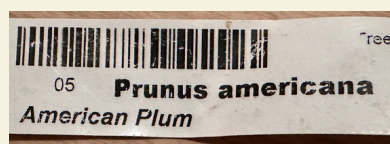
'Prairifire' Crabapple
Cultivar, but on the list of exceptions ✓



'Firedance' Dogwood
Cultivar ✗



'Pinky Promise' Snowberry
Cultivar ✗



American Plum (*Prunus americana*)
MN Native ✓



'Cinderella' Swamp Milkweed
Cultivar ✗



False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*)
MN Native ✓

Learn more about native plants vs. cultivars from [Wild Ones](#), [Grow Native!](#), and [Prairie Moon Nursery](#).