

## Basic Native Plant Terminology



### Native - Non-native:

NATIVE plants are those that occur naturally in a particular region, ecosystem, and/or habitat without direct or indirect human intervention and were present before European settlement. *Native* is the term preferred by experts and botanists.

NON-NATIVE plants are species *whose evolutionary history happened elsewhere* (a different region, ecosystem, habitat, or country). Frequently used synonyms include: non-indigenous, alien, and exotic.

These non-native species were introduced from another country e.g. Eurasia, because they are strikingly unusual or uniquely different in appearance.

### Cultivar - Nativar:

CULTIVAR ("cultivated variety") describes a plant that was selected or produced by growers from a "natural" species, and was chosen because of one or more characteristics which make it distinctly different from its species (e.g., color, size), characteristics which are maintained when the plant is propagated, usually vegetatively.

NATIVAR ("native variety") is a term for a cultivar of a native species, also resulting from selections of distinctive traits made by humans and propagated vegetatively to preserve those traits, which means that the new variety no longer participates in natural reproduction patterns that maintain genetic diversity of the species.

### Aggressive - Invasive (these terms have specific meanings and should not be used interchangeably):

AGGRESSIVE plants are *native or non-native* species that spread rapidly *in a garden* and are difficult to control; they may include ground covers, some vines, enthusiastic self-seeders, and plants that spread by rhizomes.

INVASIVE plants are species that are *non-native to the ecosystem under consideration* and whose introduction causes or is *likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health*. Invasive plants may grow faster, taller, wider, or shade out native species. Many stay green later into the season or leaf out earlier, alter hydrology, or disrupt nutrient cycles.

### Wildflower:

WILDFLOWER (or WILD FLOWER) is a vague term for any flower that grows in the wild, meaning it was not intentionally seeded or planted.

Wild Ones River City-Grand Rapids Area Chapter  
[RiverCityWildOnes.org](http://RiverCityWildOnes.org)

