



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

University of Idaho Extension  
Extension Educator  
Mike Bauer                      263-8511

April 22, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS, PART 1

Don Childress, Bonner County Master Gardener

In honor of 'Native Plant Appreciation' week, April 25-May1, this article speaks to the why and how of landscaping with native plants. Native plants grow under local conditions, they do not require the site to be change, once they are established, they do not need extra watering if they are in the correct location. They do not require synthetic pesticides or fertilizers.

### *Why should we use native plants?*

- Lower maintenance
- Less landscape water usage, after they are established
- In the west, 60% of consumed water goes to lawns
- Do not need synthetic fertilizers or pesticides
- Offer habitat for song birds and beneficial insects

There are different approaches to landscaping with natives. Conventional Appearance landscaping, follows conventional landscape design principals of geometric patterns and minimal species diversification. This style simply substitutes native plants for industrial species.

Restorative landscaping which attempts to create a more natural looking space by planting 'communities' rather than individual plant species to create the look of nature.

### *How should you go about landscaping with natives?*

Investigate and understand your site, Some essential questions to be answered are:

Is your site sunny or shady? A starting place is to make a rough plot plan of the area to be landscaped and  
[Type text]

mark down the various areas of sun/shade.

What is the soil like? The extremes are clay and sand, both will affect the drainage. You may need to amend the soil with organic matter.

Where are the buildings, pathways, property lines or other structures located?

Would there be a benefit with more shade and where would trees be located?

It is important to make a plot plan to show the different microclimates as well as the location of immovable objects such as the house, power poles, large trees, pathways, etc.

You then need to design the space. Some questions to be answered at this point are:

- Do you want a sanctuary space or open space?
- What views do you want to create, maintain or block?
- What areas to use for gardens, recreation, views, and snow piles.

After creating your space diagram (called a bubble diagram) on your plot plan to indicate various planting areas, indicate how people will move from one area to the next. Examples of these movement corridors are pathways, turf, step stones, decking and driveways.

It is this information that will be used to select the right native plant for the right location.

In the next article I will highlight some of the native plants I like to use and the environment where they grow best.

*Don Childress has been a UI Master Gardener in Bonner County since 2000 and is also very active in the Kinnickinnick Chapter of the Idaho Native Plant Society.*

*University of Idaho, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Idaho counties cooperating. Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.*

[Type text]