**Planting a Native Garden**

The most beautiful, breathtaking gardens in the world are not really gardens at all, but nature. When it comes time to do your landscaping, take a hike and look at all the wonder around you, then use what you see to create your garden. Using plants and flowers that are native to your area will give create a space that requires little maintenance to keep its beauty.

**Why Use Native Plants**

Having a garden designed with plants and flowers that are native to your area has many advantages, and is quite beautiful. Since the plants are adapted to your climate, they will grow and thrive with little care from you. You will not need to worry about mulching to keep roots warm, or covering them from the harsh heat in the summer. They will grow perfectly well, probably even better, without your interference.

Native plants are more resistant to disease than non-native plants. They have grown in the area for years, developing immunities to any natural diseases of the area. Non-native plants are not only susceptible to any problems native plants have already overcome, they also have the risk of harboring new diseases to give to already established native plants.

Trying to adjust the soil and water to accommodate both native and non-native plants can be tricky too. Some plants need to have a more porous soil than others do. The need for clay or moss to keep the plants healthy would mean adjusting the soil contents. Some plants require a higher pH in the soil than others do, now you have to consider adding ash or bone to the soil.

To mix native and non-native plants in your yard, you would need to have two separate gardens. The native garden would thrive on its own while you tended to the non-native garden.

**Getting Started**

Once you have taken a hike, or at least gone to a few local parks, go to the local garden center and talk to the people who work there. They will show you the different plants and flowers that are native to the area. The vast number of what is available will surprise and delight you. Even dessert areas have a huge variety of plants available to them.

**Preparing the Ground**

Now that you have a good idea of what you can plant, take a good look at the ground you will be planting in. Unless the topsoil has been removed, there will be no reason to add anything when you are planting native plants. They are accustomed to the nutrients in your soil, adding anything would be a detriment to their growth. If the area has been planted for a few years, you may want to add a natural fertilizer to replace diminished nutrients once the plants start growing.

It is up to you whether to get rid of any grass growing where you will be planting. If you are planting wild flowers, you merely need to trim the grass and scatter the seeds. If you want a defined garden, it may be best to kill off any weeds or grass growing there now. It is best to till up the ground first, but only one to two inches to avoid any deep seed from germinating.

**Designing the Garden**

You do not need to have every inch of land covered with flowers. Consider other bits of nature in your garden. A large rock outcropping, or a fallen log, adds to the natural beauty of the space. Have groupings of flowering plants with green leafy plants mixed in. Be sure to keep shorter flowers and plants in front of taller ones to keep them from getting lost. Consider adding in a small pool or pond for an added pleasure. If there is an electric supply nearby you can have a small fountain or waterfall. Planning and designing a native garden is the hard part, you want it to last for many years, keeping its beauty. There is no need to have it all done at the beginning of the season. You may want to consider taking a few years to get it just right; adding in plants as you get the feel of it all.

No matter where you live, you will be able to pick and choose all kinds of sizes, colors and textures for your garden. Choose some plants that will come back year after year with no replanting needed – perennials; or choose some of the unique, vibrant annuals you will need to mow down and replace next year. A good mixture of both makes your garden a sight to behold.

**Planting**

Once you have picked the spot for your garden, and picked the flowers, you need to get them planted as soon as possible. You do not want to have them sitting out in pots for a day or two, waiting to be planted, be sure to keep them in the shade while you are working with other plants.

To create a garden that looks natural, do not plant your flowers in neat rows. Think of how they grow naturally. Plant groups of the same flower together, in small bunches. Leave open spaces between groupings or fill the spots in with ground cover.

**Wildlife**

One of the distinct advantages to having a native garden is the wildlife. Do not be surprised to see birds, butterflies, and small animals in your garden. This is all part of nature. You do not want to have so many visitors they completely destroy your garden, but they can be useful in keeping overgrowing perennials or ground cover from taking over the place. They are also useful for natural fertilizer. Birds will help keep insects away, with other animals chasing off the birds. With time, it will become its own ecosystem.

**Maintaining Your Garden**

A garden comprised of plants native to your area will need to be maintained, but not nearly as much as one containing non-native plants. There will be yearly pruning of trees and bushes, replanting of annuals, and deadheading blooms to keep more blooms growing. You may want to have plants that keep away bugs planted to avoid having to use an insecticide if birds are not doing the trick. Otherwise, letting the garden take its own course may be the best thing for it.

While there will always be some plant or flower that you absolutely love that is not native to your area, it is best to keep them to a small, regulated spot in your yard. They may thrive and be gorgeous, they may survive but not truly bloom and thrive, or they may not make it at all. To have a beautiful garden, it is best to have plants that will grow, thrive and bloom., turning your yard into a natural wonder.