## Boulder County

Boulder County Land Use Department Publications

Suggested Native Plants for Horticultural Use on the Front Range of Colorado

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# Suggested Native Plants for Horticultural Use on the Front Range of Colorado

Data Prepared by the Colorado Native Plant Society<sup>1</sup> Horticulture and Restoration Committee PO Box 200 • Fort Collins • Colorado • 80522

Colorado has a wealth of native plants, colorful wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees that are well adapted to our variable climate, soils, temperatures, and elevations. The Colorado Native Plant Society (CoNPS) recommends the use of native plants in landscaping, both because of their adaptability and because Colorado has a unique regional horticulture worth promoting and protecting. Native plants, especially local ecotypes, contain the "history" of the area in their genes and will survive that especially cold, wet spring or unusually hot, dry year. Local ecotypes, from near the area to be planted, will also maintain more "natural" sources of food for local wildlife and insect species. There are several display gardens on the Front Range that feature plants native to Colorado. Please check in your area and visit them for ideas.

## **Guidelines for Obtaining Native Species:**

- Check with local nature centers or experts for recommendations.
- Buy from reputable nurseries. Ask about the origin of the seeds/plants you buy.
- Seed/plant gathering from public lands is typically prohibited (this includes the National Park Service). Special use permits are available from the US Forest Service.
- Read labels on "wildflower" mixes to verify they don't include noxious weed species. A complete list of the noxious weeds of Colorado can be found at www.colorado.gov.
- Ask for plants by their scientific name since common names may vary.

The species list that follows is primarily for landscaping along the Front Range, east of the Continental Divide. Included are recommended and generally available wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees as well as some basic habitat information. For sources of container-grown plants, check Colorado nurseries.

A list of Colorado plant vendors can be found on the Colorado Native Plant Society web page: http://conps.org/horticulture\_and\_restoration.html. More natives are being grown all the time and as the demand increases, so will the supply. If you don't see something you want, ask for it.

The Colorado Native Plant Society's Horticulture and Restoration Committee welcomes additional information regarding the use of natives. Please send your comments to Horticulture and Restoration Committee, CoNPS, P.O. Box 200, Fort Collins, CO 80522. For more information, please visit our webpage at http://conps.org.

#### **Retail Vendors of Native Seed for Boulder County**

Arkansas Valley Seed 4333 Hwy. 66 Longmont, CO 80504 (877) 907-3337 www.avseeds.com Pawnee Buttes Seed 605 25th St. Greeley, CO 80632 (800) 782-5947 www.pawneebuttesseed.com Western Native Seed P.O. Box 188 Coaldale, CO 81222 (719) 942-3935 www.westernnativeseed.com

Retail vendors excerpt updated: 2008

## Suggested Wildflowers for the Front Range of Colorado

Common Name	Latin Name (Weber)	Preferred Environment	Life Zone	Comments
Aspen daisy (showy daisy)	Erigeron speciosus	Part sun, Dry/Moist	F, M	Abundant
Black-eyed Susan	Rudbeckia hirta	Part sun, Dry/Moist	F, M	Frequent in dry mountain meadows
Blanket flower	Gaillardia aristata	Sun, Dry	P, F, M	Verify source of commercial varieties, many are hybrids; common midsummer in lower montane
Blue flax	Adenolinum (Linum) lewisii	Sun, Dry	P, F	Watch for native, interbreeds freely
Blue vervain	Verbena hastata	Sun, Moist	Р	Usually many spikes, available by seed
Broom snakeweed	Gutierrezia sarothrae	Sun, Dry	P, F	Flowers late summer
Bush sunflower	Helianthus pumilus	Sun, Dry	P, F	Perennial
Colorado columbine	Aquilegia coerulea	Sun/Shade, Moist	F, M, S	Colorado state flower
Fringed sage	Artemisia frigida	Dry	P, F, M	Woody perennial with fragrant, silver-gray foliage
Golden banner	Thermopsis divaricarpa	Part sun, Moist	F, M, S	Perennial, rhizomes
Goldenrod	Solidago spp.	Sun, Dry/Moist	Р	Many and varied species
Greenleaf penstemon (blue mist)	Penstemon virens	Part sun, Dry	P, F, M, S	Forms dense clumps, available by seed
Harebell (bluebells)	Campanula rotundifolia	Part sun, Moist	F, M, S	Perennial
Lupine (silvery)	Lupinus argenteus	Sun, Dry/Moist	P, F, M, S	Abundant
Nelson's larkspur	Delphinium nelsonii	Sun, Dry	F <i>,</i> M	Perennial
One-sided penstemon	Penstemon secundiflorus	Part sun, Dry	P, F	Attractive light blue-green leaves
Prairie clover	Dalea purpurea	Sun, Dry	P, F	Perennial, blooms midsummer, available by seed
Prairie coneflower	Ratibida columnifera	Sun, Dry	P, F	Perennial
Prairie sage (sagewort)	Artemisia ludoviciana	Dry	Р	Perennial, fragrant silvery-white/greenish foliage
Prickly pear cactus	Opuntia macrorhiza (compressa)	Sun, Dry	Р	Sparse spines
Prickly pear cactus	Opuntia polyacantha	Sun, Dry	Р	Very spiny
Pussytoes	Antennaria parvifolia	Dry	P, F, M, S	Perennial, forms large mats
Rocky Mountain beeplant	Cleome serrulata	Sun, Dry	P, F	Abundant, midsummer along roadsides
Rocky Mountain iris	lris missouriensis	Part sun, Moist	F, M, S	Perennial
Scarlet globe mallow	Sphaeralcea coccinea	Sun, Dry	P, F	Perennial, rhizomes, drought tolerant
Showy milkweed	Asclepias speciosa	Sun, Moist	P, F	Common on roadsides, fields
Spiderwort	Tradescantia occidentalis	Sun, Dry/Moist	P, F	Perennial
Spiny goldenweed	Machaeranthera pinnatifida	Sun, Dry	F	Common perennial, available by seed
Spotted gayfeather (dotted gayfeather)	Liatris punctata	Sun, Dry	P, F	Perennial, flower late summer; available by seed

## Suggested Wildflowers for the Front Range of Colorado

Common Name	Latin Name (Weber)	Preferred Environment	Life Zone	Comments
Sulphur flower	Eriogonum umbellatum	Sun, Dry	F, M	Floral bracts turn a rich russet color with age
Swamp milkweed	Asclepias incarnata	Sun, Moist	P, F	Available by seed
Tall beard-tongue	Penstemon virgatus	Part sun, Dry/Moist	F,M	Flowers numerous
Western wallflower	Erysimum asperum; E. capitatum	Sun, Dry	P, F	Watch for native species; biennial or perennial; flowers late spring to early summer
Whipple's penstemon	Penstemon whippleanus	Part sun, Dry	M,S	Common in dry forests
White evening primrose	Oenothera caespitosa	Sun, Dry	P, F, M	Perennial, blooms in early evening
Wild bergamot (horsemint or beebalm)	Monarda fistulosa	Part sun, Dry/Moist	P, F	Large flowers; aromatic foliage
Wild geranium (pineywoods geranium)	Geranium caespitosum	Part sun, Moist	F	Perennial
Wild verbena	Glandularia (Verbena) bipinnatifida	Sun, Dry	P, F	Can grow taller with extra water
Yellow stemless evening primrose	Oenothera howardii (brachycarpa)	Sun, Dry	Р	Perennial, blooms in early evening, common along Front Range

## Suggested Native Grasses for Colorado

Common Name	Latin Name (Weber)	Preferred Environment	Life Zone	Comments
Alkali sacaton	Sporobolus airoides	Moist	P, F	Damp, alkaline
Big bluestem	Andropogon gerardii	Dry	P, F	Showy summer and fall
Blue grama	Chondrosum gracile (Bouteloua gracilis)	Dry	P, F, M	Prefers sandy or gravelly soils; State grass
Buffalograss	Buchloe dactyloides	Dry	Р	Prefers full sun, tolerates clay
Canada wildrye	Elymus canadensis	Dry	P, F	Disturbed sites
Green needlegrass	Stipa (Nassella) viridula	Dry	P, F	Roadsides
Indian grass	Sorghastrum avenaceum (nutans)	Dry-moist	P, F	Prairies, bottomlands, open woods, meadows
Indian ricegrass	Achnatherum (Orzyopsis) hymenoides	Dry	P, F, M	Sandy plains, mesas
Junegrass	Koeleria macrantha	Dry	P, F, M	Prairies, open woods
Little bluestem	Schizachyrium scoparium	Dry	P, F, M	Prairies, open woods, dry hills; plants turn copper-red in fall
Mountain muhly	Muhlenbergia montana	Dry	F, M	Open woodlands, hillsides; may only be available by seed
Needle-and-thread	Hesperostipa (Stipa) comata	Dry	P, F, M	Plains, dry hills, sandy
New Mexico feathergrass	Hesperostipa (Stipa) neomexicana	Dry	P, F	Mesas, canyons, rocky slopes
Prairie cordgrass	Spartina pectinata	Moist	P, F	Marshes, wet meadows
Prairie dropseed	Sporobolus heterolepis	Dry	F	Pine forests
Prairie sandreed	Calamovilfa longifolia	Dry	P, F	Sandy prairies, hills; may only be available by seed

## Suggested Native Grasses for Colorado

Common Name	Latin Name (Weber)	Preferred Environment	Life Zone	Comments
Sand dropseed	Sporobolus cryptandrus	Dry	P, F	Sandy or loam
Sandberg's bluegrass	Poa secunda	Dry	F, M	Meadows
Side-oats grama	Bouteloua curtipendula	Dry	P, F	Prairies, rocky hills
Slender wheatgrass	Elymus trachycaulus	Moist	М	Meadows
Switchgrass	Panicum virgatum	Dry-moist	P, F	Marshes, prairies, foothills
Thickspike wheatgrass	Elymus lanceolatus	Dry-moist	F, M	Rocky slopes
Tufted hairgrass	Deschampsia cespitosa	Moist	F, M	Wet meadows, streambanks
Western wheatgrass	Pascopyrum (Agropyron) smithii	Dry-moist	P, F, M	Adaptable to variety of habitats

## Suggested Native Small/Medium Shrubs for the Front Range of Colorado

Common Name	Latin Name (Weber)	Preferred Environment	Life Zone	Comments
Antelope bitterbush	Purshia tridentata	South-facing slopes, dry well-drained soils	P, F	Attractive, birds eat the seeds
Boulder raspberry	Oreobatus (Rubus) deliciosus	Rocky ground, foothills and canyons	P, F, M	Attractive; wildlife eats the fruits
Buckbrush	Ceanothus fendleri	Open valleys, hillsides & woods; gravelly soil	P, F, M	Spiny
Common juniper	Juniperus communis ssp. alpina	Coniferous forest understory	P, F	Attractive, broad evergreen shrub
False indigo (leadplant)	Amorpha fruticosa	Streamsides	F	Attractive
Four-winged saltbush	Atriplex canescens	Alkali flats, grassy uplands, sandy soils	P, F	Birds eat the seeds
Golden currant	Ribes aureum	Plains to foothills, along roadsides and streams	P, F	Flowers sometimes have a clove scent
Kinnikinnick	Arctostaphylos uva-ursi	Semi-dry areas; needs acidic, well-drained soil	P, F	Attractive, waxy leaves and red berries; ground cover. Browsed by a wide variety of wildlife.
Mountain ninebark	Physocarpus monogynus	Rocky canyon sides, outer foothills	P, F, M	Attractive, showy flowers; birds eat the seeds
Narrow-leaf or plains yucca	Yucca glauca	Rocky areas, plains to foothills	P, F, M	Sharp foliage
Oregon-grape, holly-grape	Mahonia repens	Dry slopes	F, M	Holly-like leaves; attractive ground cover. Birds eat the fruits.
Rabbitbrush	Chrysothamnus nauseosus	Dry hills, plains to subalpine	P, F, M	Several subspecies of <i>C. nauseosus</i> are native to a wide variety of habitats
Rabbitbrush - dwarf blue	Chrysothamnus nauseosus ssp. nauseosus	Plains, foothill mesas	P, F, M	1-4 feet tall
Rabbitbrush - tall green	Chrysothamnus nauseosus ssp. graveolens	Plains; deep soils, arroyos	P, F, M	2-6 feet tall
Red-berried elder	Sambucus microbotrys (racemosa)	Along streams and moist slopes	F, M, S	Attractive dark green compound leaves and red berries

Latin Name (Weber)	Preferred Environment	Life Zone	Comments
Swida sericea (Cornus stolonifera)	Streamsides and canyon bottoms	P, F, M	Attractive glossy leaves and red bark
Cerasus (Prunus) pumila ssp. besseyi	Sandy or gravelly prairie hillsides	P, F	Purplish-black fruits are sweet and edible; Leaves turn reddish in fall
Pentaphylloides floribunda (Potentilla fruticosa)	Variety of habitats	F, M, S	Often cultivated as an ornamental
Symphoricarpos occidentalis	Plains, moist, open, grassy sites	P, F	Reddish stems, white berries
Rubacer parviflorus	Moist, shaded forests	F, M	Wildlife eats the fruits
Rhus aromatica ssp. trilobata	Dry hillsides, canyons, valleys, and plains	P, F, M	Wildlife eats the red-yellow fruits
Distegia (Lonicera) involucrata	Moist soils; forests, streamsides	F, M, S	Birds eat the fruits; hummingbirds attracted to the tubular flowers
Ribes cereum	Dry rocky open slopes; hills and ridges	P, F, M	Not spiny; wildlife eats the fruits
Jamesia americana	Cliffs and cliff bases	P, F, M	Aromatic
Rosa woodsii	Streambanks, prairies, forest edges	P, F, M	Thorny; wildlife eat the fruits
Krascheninnikovia (Ceratoides) lanata	Sandy alkaline soils	P, F	Flower clusters become fluffy, resembling lambs' tails
	Swida sericea (Cornus stolonifera) Cerasus (Prunus) pumila ssp. besseyi Pentaphylloides floribunda (Potentilla fruticosa) Symphoricarpos occidentalis Rubacer parviflorus Rhus aromatica ssp. trilobata Distegia (Lonicera) involucrata Ribes cereum Jamesia americana Rosa woodsii Krascheninnikovia	Latin Name (Weber)EnvironmentSwida sericea (Cornus stolonifera)Streamsides and canyon bottomsCerasus (Prunus) pumila ssp. besseyiSandy or gravelly prairie hillsidesPentaphylloides floribunda (Potentilla fruticosa)Variety of habitatsSymphoricarpos occidentalis Rubacer parviflorusPlains, moist, open, grassy sitesRubacer parviflorusMoist, shaded forestsRhus aromatica ssp. trilobata involucrataDry hillsides, canyons, valleys, and plainsDistegia (Lonicera) involucrataMoist soils; forests, streamsidesRibes cereumDry rocky open slopes; hills and ridgesJamesia americanaCliffs and cliff basesRosa woodsiiStreambanks, prairies, forest edgesKrascheninnikoviaSandy alkaline soils	Latin Name (Weber)EnvironmentZoneSwida sericea (Cornus stolonifera)Streamsides and canyon bottomsP, F, MCerasus (Prunus) pumila ssp. besseyiSandy or gravelly prairie hillsidesP, FPentaphylloides floribunda (Potentilla fruticosa)Variety of habitatsF, M, SSymphoricarpos occidentalis Rubacer parviflorusPlains, moist, open, grassy sitesP, FRubacer parviflorusMoist, shaded forestsF, MDistegia (Lonicera) involucrataMoist soils; forests, streamsidesF, M, SRibes cereumDry rocky open slopes; hills and ridgesP, F, MJamesia americanaCliffs and cliff basesP, F, MRosa woodsiiSandy alkaline soilsP, F, M

## Suggested Native Small/Medium Shrubs for the Front Range of Colorado

#### Suggested Native Large Shrubs/Small Trees for the Front Range of Colorado

Common Name	Latin Name (Weber)	Preferred Environment	Life Zone	Comments
Box-elder	Negundo aceroides (Acer negundo)	Stream banks	P, F	Leaves yellow in fall
Chokecherry	Padus (Prunus) virginiana ssp. melanocarpa	Hillsides, gulches, canyons & streamsides	P, F, M	Red to purple fruits a favorite of bears
Netleaf hackberry	Celtis reticulata	Dry rocky hillsides and ravine banks	P, F	Birds eat the small reddish-brown fruits
Mountain-ash	Sorbus scopulina	Rocky canyons and ravines	F, M	Orange berries produced in fall
Mountain-mahogany	Cercocarpus montanus	Open rocky woods and stony soils	P, F	Sometimes evergreen
Rocky Mountain juniper	Sabina (Juniperus) scopulorum	Dry, rocky hillsides; also along streams	P, F, M	Birds eat the fruits
Rocky Mountain maple	Acer glabrum	Moist sites, streams, and canyons	F, M, S	Attractive red stems. Birds eat the seeds, buds, and flowers.
Serviceberry	Amelanchier alnifolia	Dry, rocky slopes to moist, fertile soils	F, M, S	Wildlife eat the foliage & fruits
Smooth sumac	Rhus glabra	Slopes and canyon sides	P, F	Similar to staghorn sumac (not native), but grows shorter and without velvety branches. Leaves turn crimson in autumn.

Common Name	Latin Name (Weber)	Preferred Environment	Life Zone	Comments
Thinleaf alder	Alnus incanassp. tenuifolia	Swampy ground or sandy soil; montane streambanks and pond borders	P, F, M	Female catkins are cone-like and persist through winter
Wild plum	Prunus americana	Gulches, outwash mesas; moist soil along streambanks	P, F, M	Often forms thickets; yellow to red fruits are edible

## Suggested Native Large Trees for the Front Range of Colorado

Common Name	Latin Name (Weber)	Preferred Environment	Life Zone	Comments
Lanceleaf cottonwood	Populus x. acuminata	Streambanks and valleys	P, F	First generation sterile hybrid between <i>P. deltoides</i> and <i>P. angustifolia;</i> leaf-shape is indicitive of this cross
Narrowleaf cottonwood	Populus angustifolia	Streambanks and valleys	P, F	Long, narrow, willow-like leaves turn yellow in fall. Available as a graft onto <i>P. x acuminata</i> rootstock which should reduce suckering.
Plains cottonwood	Populus deltoides ssp. monilifera	Moist soils; floodplains, riparian areas and valley bottoms	P, F	Nursery stock should be male and therefore "cottonless"; broad leaves turn yellow-gold in fall
Ponderosa pine	Pinus ponderosa ssp. scopulorum	Variety of habitats — adaptable	P, F, M	Tall evergreen grows to 150'. Birds and small mammals eat the seeds.

Life Zones: P = Plains 4,000-6,000 ft.; F = Foothills 6,000-8,000 ft.; M = Montane 8,000-10,000 ft.; and S = Sub-alpine 10,000-11,500 ft. (or timberline).

## Plant Species Not to Use in Gardening or Revegetation

Prepared by the Colorado Native Plant Society, Boulder Chapter.<sup>1</sup> Correspondence may be sent to: CONPS; P.O. Box 200; Fort Collins, CO 80522

The plants listed below are weedy, invasive species which threaten or potentially threaten natural areas, agricultural lands and gardens. A (\*) by a plant name indicates that the species is considered a critical problem for habitat(s) in Colorado, and/or is well established as a habitat generalist. This is a preliminary list of species which have escaped from landscaping, reclamation projects and agricultural activity. All problem plants may not be included. If you are unsure about introducing a new plant into your garden or revegetation plans, maintain a conservative approach. Try to research a new plant thoroughly before using it, or omit it from your plans.

#### Forbs/Flowers Not to Use:

Common Name	Latin Name	Problem	Habitat
purple loosestrife* (morden's pink, rose queen, the rocket, purple spire, etc.)	Lythrum salicaria	Escapes gardens; displaces native vegetation; threatens cattail marshes and other wetlands	Wetlands; uplands (i.e., gardens)
Mediterranean sage	Salvia aethiopis	Escapes gardens; forms monoculture; outcompetes natives	Grasslands, pastures, meadows, range lands
myrtle spurge/Mercer's spurge	Tithymalus myrsinites (Euphorbia myrsinites)	Escapes gardens; displaces native vegetation; poisonous to touch (for some people) and if ingested	Plains, foothills
Cypress spurge	Tithymalus cyparissias (Euphorbia cyparissias)	Escapes gardens	Populated areas
dalmation toadflax *	Linaria genistifolia ssp. dalmatica (Linaria dalmatica)	Escapes gardens; displaces native vegetation; spreads easily from seed or stolon	Distrubed, open areas (roadsides, trails); plains, foothills, mountains
yellow toadflax/ butter & eggs*	Linaria vulgaris	Escapes gardens and displaces native vegetation	Like dalmation toadflax, but reaches higher elevations
ox-eye daisy	Leucanthemum vulgare (Chrysanthemum leucanthemum)	Escapes gardens; displaces native vegetation; well established	Habitat generalist: found from plains to alpine
perennial sweetpea	Lathyrus latifolius	Escapes gardens and displaces native vegetation	Common on urban fringes
dame's rocket/sweet rocket	Hersperis matronalis	Escapes gardens and displaces native vegetation	Riparian, wet meadows
soapwort/bouncing bet	Saponaria officinalis	Escapes gardens and displaces native vegetation	Roadsides, trails, homestead sites; mesas and foothills
bighead knapweed	Grossheimia macrocephela (Centaurea macrocephela)	Escapes gardens and displaces native vegetation	Plains, foothills, mountains
sulphur cinquefoil	Potentilla recta	Displaces native vegetation	Foothills
creeping/Denver bellflower	Campanula rapunculoides	Escapes gardens and displaces native vegetation	Foothills, plains, esp. shady places
St. Johnswort/Klamath weed	Hypericum perforatum	Displaces native vegetation; poisonous to some animals	Open areas in foothills
Japanese knotweed/ Japanese buckwheat	Reynoutria japonica (Polygonum cuspidatum)	Escapes gardens and displaces native vegetation	Populated areas at base of foothills
scentless chamomile	Matricaria perforata	Adventive; competes with native vegetation	Mountain roadsides, pastures, and town sites
sweet-clover (white and yellow)	Melilorus alba (Melilotus officianalis)	Reclamation escapee	Roadsides, trails
chicory	Cichorum intybus	Adventive; competes with native vegetation	Roadsides, trails, open areas

#### Forbs/Flowers Not to Use:

Common Name	Latin Name	Problem	Habitat
oriental virgin's bower	Viticella orientalis (Clematis orientalis)	Adventive; competes with native vegetation	Foothills, mountains
wild carrot/Queen Anne's lace	Daucus carota	Garden escapee; competes with native vegetation	Roadsides, plains, foothills

#### Grasses Not to Use:

Common Name	Species Name	Problem	Habitat
thread grass	Stipa tennuifolia	Becoming a popular xeriscape plant, volunteers readily; potential weed of the future	Foothills, grasslands
smooth brome	Bromopsis inermis (Bromus inermis)	Reclamation, pasture grass; competes with native vegetation via extensive underground roots	Plains, foothills, mountains
crested wheatgrass	Agropyron cristatum	Reclamation grass, persistent	Roadsides, trails
timothy	Phleum pratense	Pasture escapee; competes with native vegetation	Dry to wet, habitat generalist
orchardgrass	Dactylis glomerata	Pasture escapee; competes with native vegetation	Dry to wet, habitat generalist

#### Shrubs Not to Use:

Common Name	Species Name	Problem	Habitat
scotch broom	Cytisus scoparius	Escapes gardens and displaces native vegetation	A problem on the west coast of U.S.A.
glossy or alder buckthorn	Frangula alnus (Rhamnus frangula)	Garden escapee; competes with native vegetation	Riparian, plains, urban

#### Trees Not to Use:

Common Name	Species Name	Problem	Habitat
Russian-olive *	Eleagnus angustifolia	escapes and displaces native vegetation; seed commonly dispersed by birds	riparian corridors
tamarisk * (salt-cedar)	Tamarix ramosissima	escapes and displaces native vegetation; uses large amounts of water	riparian corridors
crack willow	Salix fragilis	originally cultivated along streams; established and displaces native willow, cottonwood, etc.	riparian corridors, plains, cultivated valleys
white willow	Salix alba var. Vitellina	originally cultivated along streams; established and displaces native willow, cottonwood, etc.	riparian corridors, plains, cultivated valleys

<sup>1</sup> Lists modified by Boulder County, 2008.