

New Naturalism

Lessons from Wild Plant Communities

Kelly D. Norris

The Nature of Planting

Welcome to my Three Oaks Garden. In 2017, I began the first chapter of a half-acre ecologically driven garden at home.

What does naturalistic planting really mean?

Does it mean a planting evokes nature, perhaps only as an illusion? Does it mimic nature? Does it translate natural function into a beautiful result?

Gardens are refugia for life. The smallest moments we treasure as gardeners are only a glimpse of the biodiversity that can thrive in our midst.

Understanding Plants

Plants are up to something. Get to know them beyond their pretty faces.

Plants are social creatures. Plants thrive in complex communities in the wild.

Competition, stress and disturbance influence plant performance in the landscape. Fostering interactions between plants and place grounds our garden in an ecological reality.

Techniques for Planting Ecologically Vibrant Gardens

Organize your plant palette into layers. Using a simple archetype, you can think of plantings as three interacting layers: matrix, structure and vignettes.

Plant densely and diversely. Dense, diverse wefts of plantings cover the ground and form habitat for wildlife.

Start small. For many species, planting smaller minimizes transplant stress and reduces your planting bills!

Embrace change. Change is the life force of an ecological garden—nothing is static.