

CAN OUR GARDENS SAVE US FROM OURSELVES?

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Why isn't ecological gardening and design catching on?

In the United States, urban and suburban areas:

- cover 25-35% total lands
- protected lands cover about 30%
- turfgrass and non-native plant species are dominant

Many homeowners and gardeners do not see a connection between the decisions they make about their gardens and the surrounding ecosystem.

- Yard – often seen as a place to appreciate the benefits of nature, but not part of the surrounding natural world
- Gardens – used to experience nature, management decisions not always perceived to have implications on the environment

Social norms regarding **“what the neighbors seem to prefer”** have a powerful effect on us regarding our management decisions.

- How do our perceptions of what we think is expected influence the decisions we make about our gardens?
- What can be done to altering these perceptions to foster pro-environmental behavior?

What can we do?

Cues to Care

- Developed by Joan Iverson Nassauer at the University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability
- Blend ecology and aesthetics to create environmentally beneficial landscapes that adhere to local cultural norms

Ecological Design

- Creating spaces that are both beautiful and ecologically viable
 - plant selection
 - rethinking lawns
 - focus on building diversity and use natives when possible

Management Techniques

- Focus on stewardship over traditional “mow, spray, blow” techniques

EXAMPLE – Rock Garden at Cantigny Park in Wheaton, IL

- Goal to create a Rock Garden that showcases a diverse array of hardy, drought-tolerant plants that will thrive in the Midwest without excessive care and resources, and will also look good throughout the year

A few of my current favorites...

Aster (*Eurybia*) *divaricata* 'Eastern Star', *A. ericoides* 'Snow Flurry', *A. oblongifolius* 'October Skies'
Calamintha *nepeta* ssp. *nepeta*
Coreopsis *tinctoria* 'Roulette'
Carex *eburnia*
Carex *flaccosperma*
Cornus *serica* 'Cardinal'
Dalea *purpurea*
Eupatorium *maculatum* 'Phantom'
Gentiana *andrewsii* and *G. 'True Blue'*
Geranium x *cantabrigense* 'Biokovo'
Gillenia *trifoliata* (*Porteranthus trifoliatus*)
Hamamelis x *intermedia* 'Arnold's Promise'
Heuchera *villosa* 'Bronze Wave'
Hosta 'Rainbow's End'
Hydrangea *arborescens* 'Haas Halo'
Hydrangea *quercifolia* 'Ruby Slippers'
Kniphofia *PYROMANIA* 'Orange Blaze'
Malus 'Royal Raindrops', *M. 'Donald Wyman'*, *M. sargentii* 'Firebird'
Oenothera *missouriensis*
Origanum *laevagatum* 'Herrenhausen'
Osmunda *regalis* var. *spectabilis*
Panicum 'Northwind', *P. 'Cheyenne Sky'*
Penstemon 'Husker's Red'
Pinus *strobus*
Phlox 'Jeana', *P. 'Coral Crème'*, *P. 'Zion'*
Plectranthus *effusus* var. *longitubus* (may not be reliably hardy north of Chicago)
Quercus *macrocarpa*
Schizachyrium *scoparium* 'Jazz', *S. 'Standing Ovation'*
Sesleria *heufleriana*, *S. 'Greenlee's Hybrid'*
Sporobolus *heterolepsis* 'Tara'
Silphium *terebinthinaceum*
Thuja *plicata* 'Green Giant'
Vernonia 'Summer's Swan Song'
Viburnum *prunifolium*

If you would like a detailed list of the plants used in the Rock Garden at Cantigny, please contact me directly.