



Lupine.



Blanket flower.

## Environmental Benefits of Native Plants

### Root Structure

Native plants have an extensive root structure. Native roots improve the capacity of the soil to absorb water and prevent erosion.

### Organic Matter Content

Native plants' root structure builds organic matter content which is a key component of a hydrologically functional landscape. High organic matter content helps soil hold water like a sponge and absorb rain.

### Managing Native Plantings

During the establishment year, native plantings need routine weeding and watering. Fertilizer is not recommended for native plantings. Fertilizer can stimulate rapid growth and cause plants to flop over and promote the growth of undesirable weed species. New growth can be stimulated by removing old growth each spring.

Annually inspect native plantings for noxious weed species to prevent an infestation of these aggressive plants.

### More Information About Native Landscaping

Find additional information about native landscaping by visiting the following websites:

- [www.umt.edu/mnps/](http://www.umt.edu/mnps/)
- [www.plantingmontana.com](http://www.plantingmontana.com)
- [www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/plants/technotes/pmtechnoteMT57.html](http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/plants/technotes/pmtechnoteMT57.html)

### Native Plant Adaptation and Planting Information

- [www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/plants.html](http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/plants.html)
- [www.extn.msu.montana.edu/yard.asp](http://www.extn.msu.montana.edu/yard.asp)
- [www.plants.usda.gov](http://www.plants.usda.gov)

More information on this topic is also available from your local NRCS or county conservation district office.

## How do I Incorporate Native Plants?

Native prairie plantings can be established from seed, young plants, or plugs. Plugs are best for residential areas because they are easier to establish and maintain. Plants can be incorporated into an existing garden bed or a new bed can be made by removing sod and loosening the soil.

In residential areas, it is usually best to use short native plants to create an aesthetically pleasing landscape. Native prairie plants can be located anywhere in a sunny landscape. They can be intermingled in more formal beds and borders or create a natural prairie garden. A turf border should be left to define the area or provide a path through the planting.

Choose plants based on site considerations for light, moisture, and soil. Vary plant structure, height, bloom succession, and flower color for seasonal appeal and butterfly habitat. After planting, a shredded-wood mulch layer helps establish natives by retaining moisture and discouraging weeds. The use of adapted native plants reduces the need for supplemental water during dry periods.

## Buying Native Plants

Plants of the same species can vary considerably, depending on their geographic origin. To find local native plants for your area, look for a seed or plant source that sells local ecotypes. Be wary of "wildflower" mixes because many of these mixes contain seeds native to the United States, but not necessarily to Montana.

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# Native Landscaping

... builds soil quality and enhances the landscape

## What are Native Plants?

Native plants are plants that grew naturally in the pre-settlement grasslands and forests of Montana. Shortgrass prairie developed over much of central and eastern Montana more than 10,000 years ago after the retreat of glaciers. This ecosystem included grasses, shrubs, trees, flowering plants, insects, and other animals adapted to survive a wide range of conditions ranging from hot and dry to cold and moist. On the plains, much of the prairie sod has disappeared because of the conversion to agricultural production following settlement.

## What is Native Landscaping?

Native landscaping is a simple way to reincorporate native grasses, flowers, shrubs and trees into the landscape. Native forbs, or flowers, bloom throughout the season and attract butterflies, hummingbirds, and other



Native accent grasses in fall color. Try to devote at least 30 percent of open space to native landscaping.

pollinator species. Hardy native grasses and shrubs also provide rich colors for fall and winter appeal.

Once established, native plants are easy to maintain because they are adapted to Montana temperatures, rainfall patterns, and soil conditions. They also resist local pests and disease. Native plants reduce soil erosion, build soil structure, and absorb rainfall.



Urban landscape with native plants in summer foliage: staghorn sumac, horizontal and common juniper, western mountain ash, aspen, skunkbush sumac, rose, shrubby cinquefoil, and ponderosa pine.

# Native Landscaping in a Neighborhood Setting

Devote at least 30 percent of green space (yards, parks, campuses) to native landscaping, and direct runoff toward native landscaped areas.

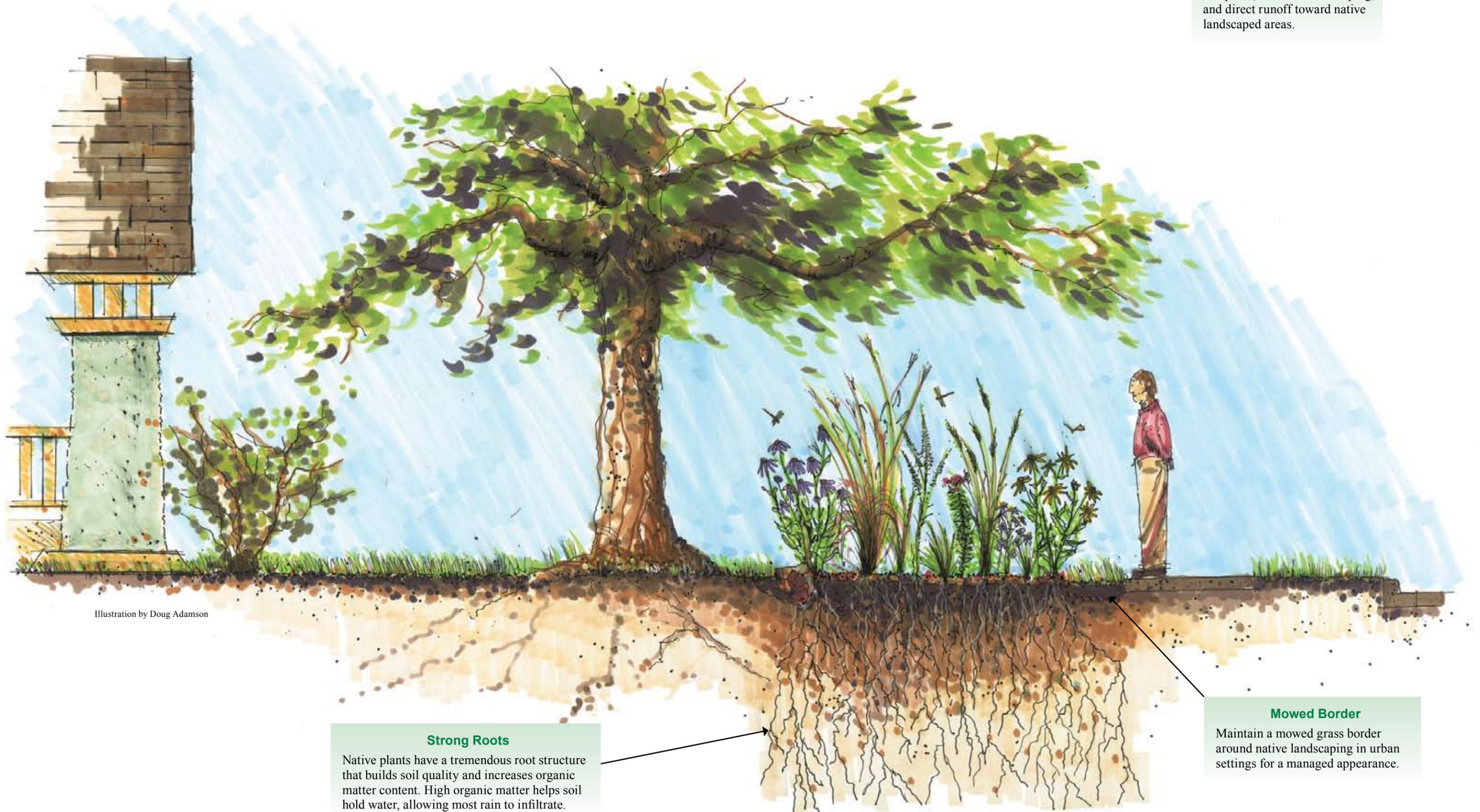


Illustration by Doug Adamson

## Strong Roots

Native plants have a tremendous root structure that builds soil quality and increases organic matter content. High organic matter helps soil hold water, allowing most rain to infiltrate.

## Mowed Border

Maintain a mowed grass border around native landscaping in urban settings for a managed appearance.