

AMORPHA CANESCENS (Family: Fagaceae)

LEAD PLANT

Growing as deciduous shrubs up to three feet tall, Lead Plant is topped by spike-like masses of tiny iridescent violet blossoms. Each flower has a single 1/4"-long petal curling around 10 bright orange-tipped stamens. Its leaflets are silver/gray with alternate, pinnately compound leaves and densely hairy twigs. It prefers full sun but will tolerate part shade. The branches will reach for light in partial shade conditions however, giving it a more sprawling form with fewer flowers. It is not picky about soil type and will grow in all types of medium to very dry sandy, gravel, loam, and clay.

The plant's tough 7" roots made pioneer plowing difficult, causing early settlers to dub it "Devil's Shoestrings." Its deep roots enable the plant to survive prairie fires and times of drought. After very tough winters, it may die back to the ground but the extreme long-lived nature of Lead Plant and its deep tap root will usually allow it to recover. Speculative accounts about its common name credit the dusky hue of the foliage or an old belief that the plant's presence was an indicator of sub-surface lead ore.

Species of genus Amorpha ["shapeless"] are legumes. Most legume species harbor beneficial bacteria called rhizobia on their roots. When germinating seed, inoculate the seeds with the bacterium called inoculum.

BLOOM TIME: end of May-early August
BLOOM COLOR: Iridescent violet with bright orange pollen
HEIGHT: 2-3'

NATIVE TO: All Chicago region counties

TOLERATES: Deer, heavy shade, erosion, wet soil

PLANTED/YEAR: 1 Plant in Each Tier (2018)





LEAD PLANT produces an abundance of pollen and nectar which therefore attracts an uncommonly wide variety of insects.

Lead Plant is pollinated primarily by bees. 81 species (20%) of bees known in the Chicago region visit this plant. After Lead Plant blooms, the bees most often move to Monarda and then to Asters.

Many wasps, beetles, flies, and various bugs depend on this legume for food.

BUTTERFLIES THAT ENJOY LEAD PLANT:

- Black Swallowtail
- Eastern Tailed-Blue
- Eastern Tiger Swallowtail
- Great Spangled Fritillary
- Monarch
- Southern Dogface
- Gray Hairstreak Larvae eat foliage and flowers
- Southern Dogface Larvae eat foliage and flowers
- Schinia lucens moth (adult and larvae)
- Washia amorphella moth (adult and larvae)



AQUILEGIA canadensis
(Family: Ranunculaceae)
COLUMBINE 'Little Lanterns'

BLOOM TIME: Mid-April - July

BLOOM COLOR: Red petals and yellow interior

HEIGHT: 10" C=6

ATTRACTS: Ruby throated Hummingbirds **RESISTS:** Deer, rabbits

SEED: Tiny black balls are easy to collect. Will propagate easily.



ASARUM CANADENSE var. REFLEXUM (Family: Aristolochiaceae)

CANADIAN or WILD GINGER

Wild Ginger is a spring wildflower which occurs as a groundcover in rich woods and wooded slopes. It is basically a stemless plant which features two downy, heart-shaped to kidney-shaped, handsomely veined, dull dark green, basal leaves (to 6" wide). Cup-shaped, purplish brown flowers (1" wide) appear in spring on short, ground-level stems arising from the crotch between the two basal leaves. Flowers are quite attractive on close inspection, but bloom singly on or near the ground and are usually hidden from view by the foliage. Although not related to culinary ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), the roots of this plant produce a scent that is reminiscent of it.

Fresh or dried roots of Wild Ginger were used by early Americans as a ginger substitute, but the plant is not normally used today for culinary purposes.

BLOOM TIME: end of April-end of May

BLOOM COLOR: Insignificant purplish/brown disguised under leaves

HEIGHT: 8-12"

NATIVE TO: All counties of the Chicago region except McHenry

TOLERATES: Deer, heavy shade, erosion, wet soil

PLANTED/YEAR: Approx. 10 Plants in each Upper Tier under Redbuds (2018)



ASCLEPIAS TUBEROSA (Family: Asclepiadaceae? Apocynaceae?)

BUTTERFLY WEED

Asclepias tuberosa, commonly called butterfly weed, is a tuberous rooted, Missouri native perennial which occurs in dry/rocky open woods, glades, prairies, fields and roadsides throughout the State (Steyermark). It typically grows in a clump to 1-3' tall and features clusters (umbels) of bright orange to yellow-orange flowers atop upright to reclining, hairy stems with narrow, lance-shaped leaves. Unlike many of the other milkweeds, this species does not have milky-sapped stems. Flowers give way to prominent, spindle-shaped seed pods (3-6" long) which split open when ripe releasing numerous silky-tailed seeds for dispersal by the wind. Seed pods are valued in dried flower arrangements. Long bloom period from late spring throughout the summer. Flowers are a nectar source for many butterflies and leaves are a food source for monarch butterfly larvae (caterpillars). Also commonly called pleurisy root in reference to a prior medicinal use of the plant roots to treat lung inflammations.

Drought tolerant. Does well in poor, dry soils. New growth tends to emerge late in the spring. Plants are easily grown from seed, but are somewhat slow to establish and may take 2-3 years to produce flowers. Mature plants may freely self-seed in the landscape if seed pods are not removed prior to splitting open. Butterfly weed does not transplant well due to its deep taproot, and is probably best left undisturbed once established.

Aesculapius was a doctor and son of Apollo and student of the centaur Chiron. He is often credited with the invention of medicine.

BLOOM TIME: mid June – early September

BLOOM COLOR: Clusters (umbels) of bright Yellow/Orange

HEIGHT: 1-2.5'

NATIVE TO: All Chicago region counties **C=8**

TOLERATES: Deer, drought, erosion, dry soil, shallow/rocky soil

PLANTED/YEAR:





pollen and nectar which therefore attracts a wide variety of insects.

Many bees, wasps, beetles, flies, ants and various bugs depend on this plant for food.



BUTTERFLIES THAT ENJOY BUTTERFLY WEED:

- Edwards Hairstreak
- Eastern Tiger Swallowtail
- Great Spangled Fritillary
- Regal Fritillary (rare)
- Karner Blue (rare)
- Monarch
- Spicebush Swallowtail
- Unexpected Cynia (larvae) Moth



BAPTISIA australis (Family: Fabaceae)
Blue Wild Indigo

BLOOM TIME: June **HABIT:** Tall, very bushy

BLOOM COLOR: Violet blue petals on upright butterfly-shaped pea-like flowers

FALL COLOR: Its blue-green, three-part leaves turn silver as they dry

HEIGHT: 36" **C**=not native to Chicago region

ATTRACTS: Black Swallowtail, Great Spangled Fritillary, Monarch, Orange Sulphur, Silver-spotted Skipper. Two weevils breed and feed on Baptisia. Bees use the flowers for pollen and nectar. **RESISTS:** Deer, rabbits

PROPAGATION: Use seed collected from the pods; scarify with sandpaper; plant ¼" deep in fall or spring (cold treatment is not necessary); germinates in 1-2 weeks. Flowers in 2-3 years. Babies transplant easily but mature plants have tough roots.

HISTORY: Dried, powdered roots used as emetic and laxative tea by native Americans. The plant can also be used as a blue dye.



ECHINACEA PALLIDA
[Family = Asteraceae]
PALE PURPLE CONEFLOWER

produces an abundance of pollen and nectar which attract a wide variety of butterflies, bees, and leaf beetles.

BLOOM TIME: June-August

BLOOM COLOR: Pale pink

HEIGHT: 3'

NATIVE TO: All counties in Chicago region. **C = 10**

TOLERATES: Full sun.

PLANTED / YEAR:



The caterpillars of the butterfly *Chlosyne nycteis* (Silvery Checkerspot) feed on the foliage, while caterpillars of the moths *Synchlora aerata* (Wavy-Lined Emerald) and *Eupithecia miserulata* (Common Eupithecia) feed on the flowerheads.

Photo Sources: Brent Horvath, Intrinsic Perennial Gardens;
illinoiswildflowers.info

Goldfinches occasionally eat the seeds.

ECHINACEA PURPUREA

[Family = Asteraceae]

PURPLE CONEFLOWER has flowers which attract Monarch butterflies and several bee species.

BLOOM TIME: Mid July-mid August

BLOOM COLOR: Pale pink

HEIGHT: 3'

NATIVE TO: Native to Lake County, but not all counties in Chicago region. **C = 10**

TOLERATES: Full sun. Rain gardens. May wilt if too dry.

PLANTED / YEAR:



Photo Source: Prairie Nursery; wikimedia

ECHINACEA PURPUREA
[Family = Asteraceae]
PURPLE
CONEFLOWER
(continued)



A Tiger Swallowtail visits a Coneflower.

Silvery checkerspot caterpillars feed on the leaves after hibernating for the winter at the base of the plant. Do not disturb!

Because of its long bloom period, many butterflies depend on its nectar.

Goldfinches love the seedheads.

Several species of bees, such as *Megachile pugnata* and *Halictus legatus*, visit the flowers.



GILLENIA trifoliata (Family: Rosaceae)
INDIAN PHYSIC or **BOWMAN'S ROOT**

BLOOM TIME: June **HABIT:** Bushy, wiry red stems

BLOOM COLOR: Five delicate white petals held in wine red cups

FALL COLOR: Three-part toothed leaves turn red

HEIGHT: 24-36" **C=**not native to Chicago region

ATTRACTS: unknown **RESISTS:** Deer, rabbits

PROPAGATION: Divide in spring or use seed collected in the fall

HISTORY: Dried, powdered roots used as emetic and laxative by native Americans

PENSTEMON

[Family = Scrophulariaceae]

BEARDTONGUE 'PRAIRIE TWILIGHT' is

attractive to many bees but especially to the Ruby Throated Hummingbird.

BLOOM TIME: May – July

BLOOM COLOR: Lavender with white lips. Upper leaves turn reddish in fall.

HEIGHT: 1.5 - 2'

NATIVE TO: All counties in Chicago region. **C = 4**

TOLERATES: Full sun, dry conditions. Avoid wet soils. Cut back after flowering.

PLANTED / YEAR:



Source: Missouri Botanical Garden

SAND PRAIRIE PHLOX
Family = Polemoniaceae
PHLOX PILOSA



It is difficult to start plants from seeds, but somewhat easier from transplants. Prairie Phlox can be temperamental and short-lived if a site doesn't suit its requirements.

Mammalian herbivores readily consume Prairie Phlox, including rabbits, deer, groundhogs, and livestock. It may be difficult to establish this plant where there is an overpopulation of these animals. [Source: IL Wildflowers.info]

BUTTERFLIES and BEES THAT ENJOY PHLOX PILOSA:

- American Painted Lady
- Eastern Tiger Swallowtail and related
- Sulphur(s)
- Cloudywing Skippers
- Caterpillars of the Prairie Phlox Flower Moth [*Schinia Indiana*], *Heliothis turbatus* (Spotted Straw) and *Heliothis phloxiphaga* (Dark-spotted Straw) feed on the flowers and developing seeds.
- Bumblebees, Anthophorine bees, Carpenter bees (*Ceratina* spp.), Cuckoo bees (*Nomada* spp.), and Green metallic bees (*Agapostemon* spp.)



PHLOX PILOSA
SAND PRAIRIE PHLOX

produces an abundance of pollen and lightly fragrant nectar which attract butterflies and bees.

BLOOM TIME: End of May – end of June

BLOOM COLOR: Lavender

HEIGHT: 6" – 18"

NATIVE TO: Lake County. **C = 8**

TOLERATES: Full sun, but grows in partial sun and moist to mesic soil. The bottom leaves may turn yellow if the plant is stressed.

PLANTED / YEAR:





VERONICASTRUM VIRGINICUM

[Family = Scrophulariaceae]

CULVER'S ROOT produces an abundance of pollen and nectar which attract a wide variety of bees and several species of beetles.

BLOOM TIME: End of June-end of August

BLOOM COLOR: White or Lavender

HEIGHT: 3-5'

NATIVE TO: All counties in Chicago region. **C = 8**

TOLERATES: Full sun, but prefers the cool recesses of the woods. Leaves may turn yellowish in full sun.

PLANTED / YEAR:

