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## Rainy Day Solutions

by MaryAnn Fink – [www.maryannfink.com](http://www.maryannfink.com)

When choosing which natives are best for your sometimes wet area, your landscape, consider height, wildlife attraction, flowering and sun/shade tolerance. Call me for native plant recommendations.

The following are ten common species of plants, flowers and trees that grow well in the weather conditions of our region. These are attractive and ideal options for residents who want to start landscaping their yards with native plants.

Name	Description
<p><b><u>Bluestar</u></b> <i>Amsonia tabernaemontana</i></p> 	<p>Star-shaped, powdery-blue flowers that bloom in clusters in spring atop generally upright stems densely clothed with feathery, soft-textured, almost thread-like leaves. The unique foliage remains green throughout summer, but changes to gold in fall. Foliage clumps grow to 3 feet tall, with stems cascading as the season progresses. Mass or group for best foliage display. Easily grown in borders, open woodland areas and native plant gardens.</p>
<p><b><u>Blue False Indigo</u></b> <i>Baptisa australis</i></p> 	<p>Erect stalks of blue, lupine-like flowers cover this native perennial in spring. Flowers give way to inflated black seed capsules valued for use in dried arrangements. Plants become shrubby after bloom, displaying attractive, clover-like blue-green leaves. Early Americans used the plant as a substitute for true indigo in making blue dyes. Grow as a specimen or in groups in borders, or naturalize in cottage gardens, prairie areas, meadows or native plant gardens.</p>
<p><b><u>Willowleaf Sunflower</u></b> <i>Helianthus salicifolius</i></p>	<p>Easily grown in average, medium-wet, well-drained soil in full sun. Tolerant of wide range of soil conditions. If grown in part shade, plants tend to be</p>



taller and more open, produce fewer flowers and require support. Spreads over time by creeping rhizomes to form dense colonies. Divide every 3–4 years to control invasiveness and maintain vigor.

### Smooth Hydrangea

*Hydrangea arborescens*



Flattened clusters of dull white flowers appear in early summer on this native shrub. Prompt removal of spent flower heads may promote a late summer rebloom. Oval, serrate, dark green leaves are attractive throughout the growing season. Best form in formal garden areas may be achieved by cutting back stems each year to 12 inches in late winter. If cut back, this shrub will still grow to 3–5 feet tall in a single season. Perhaps best naturalized in native plant or woodland gardens.

### Spicebush

*Lindera benzoin*



A tough, broad, rounded shrub that grows 6–12 feet tall. This is an attractive selection for shrub borders, open woodland gardens or along stream/pond edges. Fragrant, yellow flowers bloom along the branches in early spring before the foliage emerges. Female plants produce bright red berries in autumn. Light green leaves turn yellow in autumn. Leaves are spicily aromatic when crushed.

### Cardinal Flower

*Lobelia cardinalis*



This native forb is noted for its intense red flowers, late summer bloom and ability to thrive in moist, shady locations. Densely packed two-lipped cardinal red flowers bloom in erect flowering spikes typically growing 2–4 feet tall from July to September. Good for open shady border areas, wildflower gardens, shade/woodland gardens or stream/pond margins. Flowers are attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds.

### Ninebark

*Physocarpus opulifolius*



This tough, thicket-forming, deciduous shrub grows 5–8 feet tall with gracefully arching branches. Year-round ornamental features include spirea-like clusters of pinkish to white flowers in spring; lobed dark green leaves in summer and inflated capsule-like fruits that mature in autumn. The exfoliating reddish-brown bark, for which this plant is named, is best observed after leaf drop and throughout winter. Good for shrub borders, open woodland areas and naturalized areas.

### Sourgum

*Nyssa sylvatica*



Although native to lowlands, this stately tree does exceedingly well as a residential landscape shade tree. It matures to 30–50 feet tall with a straight deeply textured trunk and rounded crown.

Handsome dark green summer foliage gives way to spectacular orange-scarlet-purple fall color. Female trees produce dark-blue oval fruits that are quite attractive to birds and wildlife. Performs well in moist lowspots.

### Purple Coneflower

*Echinacea purpurea*



Lots of rosy purple flowers with non-drooping petals around a brown cone-shaped seed head. Very easy to grow. Adapts to many soil types and grows well in full sun or light shade. Remove seed heads after flowering if self-seeding is not desired. Use Plant in the border, native plant garden, naturalized area, prairie or wildflower meadow. Good cut flower and excellent nectar source for butterflies. Songbirds feed on the dry seed. Height of two to three feet

### Black-eyed Susan

*Rudbeckia fulgida*



This plant is easy to grow, grows fast, and gives a bright show of color; but is rather short-lived. Black-eyed Susans will self-seed after blooming to give another display later in the year, flowering mid-spring through summer. Features include large golden yellow flowers with dark brown conical centers.

*Photos courtesy of Missouri Botanical Gardens*

Each of these species of plants should be readily available at your local lawn and garden store or nursery.

For more information on native plants:

- [Grow Native!](#)