So, what exactly are Native Plants?
Native plants are those that occur naturally within a defined area. Native plants include trees, shrubs, vines, annuals and perennials. They have evolved in harmony with the local climate conditions, geology, flora and fauna.

What is Biodiversity?
Biodiversity is the shortened form of two words "biological" and "diversity". It refers to all the variety of life that can be found on Earth (plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms). Ecosystems are comprised of all these organisms interconnected in a complex, stable and sustainable network of life. The more species diversity there is in an ecosystem, the healthier and more stable the ecosystem will be when under stress.

Why care about Native Plants?
Of course, native plants are fascinating, beautiful and, by definition, well suited to thrive in the local landscape. But most importantly they serve an essential role in biodiversity. Butterflies, moths, bees and other insects rely on specific native plants for nectaring and as a necessary food source for their caterpillars and larvae. These insects and their larvae sustain local and migrating birds, bats and other wildlife. Native plants are the foundation of biodiversity!

How many Native Plants do I need to make a difference?
Studies tell us that every time that you add a productive native plant to your landscape you improve your local food web. Moreover, woody plants (trees and shrubs) support more wildlife species than herbaceous plants but nectaring plants are necessary for pollinators. The important thing is to get native plants of all types into your landscape. Since most of our suburbs contain around 90% lawn that provides neither food nor shelter, even small additions of native plants benefit wildlife.

How do I start?
Creating a biodiverse landscape with native plants is a rewarding step by step process. Start planting a few natives at a time. Remember it is a work in progress.

As you add more plants they will begin attracting butterflies, moths, birds and more! The important thing is to get started. According to author Dr. Doug Tallamy in his latest book, *Nature’s Best Hope*, planting "keystone" species (plants that have a “disproportionately large effect on the abundance and diversity of other species in an ecosystem”) is a successful way to start or to add to your native landscape palette. The National Wildlife Federation has a website that provides keystone species for your area just by entering your zip code at [nwf.org/nativeplantfinder](http://nwf.org/nativeplantfinder).

Remove Invasive Species.
Habitat loss and invasive plants are the leading cause of native biodiversity loss. Invasive plant species spread aggressively and can displace native plants and create monocultures. More information can be found on the Ohio Invasive Plants Council website at: [https://www.oipc.info](https://www.oipc.info).

Nativars and Straight Native Species
Cultivars of native plants are often termed “nativars” (usually a ‘catchy’ name is listed after the species name). They are propagated for aesthetic characteristics such as unique flower and foliage color, flower density or size. These adaptations, however, may reduce their value as a food source by insects. When purchasing plants to create a food web that supports biodiversity we recommend using straight native species when possible.

Limit use of Pesticides and Herbicides.
These compounds, through their production, use, and disposal, adversely affect the rich biodiversity on which life depends; the loss of biodiversity worldwide is well documented. Many of these "cides" -- insecticides, fungicides, herbicides and rodenticides – often unintentionally cause harm to wildlife, pets and people. For more information, visit [www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org).

Purchase your Sign and Spread the Word!
By displaying your “Growing Native Plants for Biodiversity” sign you are showing your pledge to making your landscape a nature-friendly environment. It's a great conversation starter with your friends and neighbors. The more landscapes planted with native plants the more positive the impact on biodiversity.

For more information on native plants and to purchase your sign online visit: [www.midwestnativeplants.org](http://www.midwestnativeplants.org).

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Grow Native Plants for Biodiversity
Support Biodiversity and Midwest Native Plant Society by Planting Natives and Purchasing your Sign!