



Lake County Seed Collection Guide

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For Native Gardeners

Kelly Schultz¹, Dale Shields²

version 1 8/2021

¹Lake County Forest Preserve District, ²Volunteer Stewardship Network

Images ©DJShields. Produced by: Dale Shields & Kelly Schultz ©Lake County Forest Preserve District [kschultz@lcfpd.org]

The pictures in this guide were assembled to help native gardeners identify ripe seeds of native species. The squares are 1" on a side in the indoor shots with white squares on the gray background. The seed shots are on a metric scale (mm divisions). Names used are those of Flora of the Chicago Region by Gerould Wilhelm and Laura Rericha. Our heartfelt thanks go to Laurie Ryan of the McHenry County Conservation District for her review.

Harvest notes

Successful collection of viable seed requires an understanding of when to collect, how to collect, how to store, how to process, and when to sow. Determine these criteria and have a plan before harvesting seeds, especially of uncommon species. The species are listed in order of the photo dates, so will give an approximate time for collection, but collection dates vary according to local weather effects on blooming and pollinators; proximity to Lake Michigan; slopes; sun vs shade, etc. Many seed harvest charts are available with collection dates, but it is best to scout each site rather than relying on historic dates.

Seeds collected before mid-June should be sown right away. They are intolerant of dry storage and most of them require both warm & cold treatments to stimulate germination. Late June seeds are more tolerant of dry storage; sow these seeds soon, but you can let them dry for a few weeks. Seeds ripening July and later can be held for fall/winter sowing, sow by Jan 1st for best results.

Collect ethically & sustainably. Everything is protected in forest preserves, including seeds. Collection is only allowed by staff and volunteers in our restoration programs. If you are collecting within those programs, it is important to avoid overharvesting wild populations. For perennials: **leave 50% behind**. For annuals, biennials, rare, threatened, or endangered species: **collect only 10% of the seed**.

Seed Groups

Time sensitive groups – seeds disperse in a few days or weeks due to wildlife, sensitivity to wind, etc.

Elaiosomes are “ant candy” attached to the seeds. Ants are strong and motivated, able to quickly carry the candy back to their home and tossing the heavy “candy wrapper” (seeds) into their compost piles. Check these species frequently; ants will rapidly collect all of the seeds. These seeds have higher germination when sown within a day or two.



Ballistic capsules catapult their babies away, up to 30 feet! Search YouTube for “exploding seeds” to see these in action. To harvest: learn the ripening sequence & harvest just before explosion; store in a *sealed* paper bag or mesh bag for a day or two. Another option is to cover the seed heads with mesh hoods (*after flowers wilt*) to contain the seeds. Snip the entire stem after the seeds have popped, and carefully open the hoods indoors.



Fluffy seeds are quite common, allowing for wind to efficiently move seeds over long distances. Collect when fluffy. It is ok to collect these seeds *slightly* early, by collecting entire stems with seeds that are either fully poofed or have dropped their ray florets (the colorful “petals”); snip the stems and let them poof in a paper or mesh bag. Spring fluffy seeds are typically more sensitive to strong weather.



Milkweed seeds are ripe when pods are split open & seeds are brown. Ignore the pod color. Pro tip: rubber band the unripe pods, to prevent seeds from flying away.



Berries turn a vibrant color when ripe, as an advertisement to the wildlife to EAT ME and disperse the seed. Collection window is small for some of these seeds. These species need to be sown fresh in damp soil OR cleaned & stored in plastic in the refrigerator (which maintains a higher level of humidity). The natural process of a seed stored in a juicy berry, followed by chewing, digestion, and dispersal in a pile of “fertilizer” means these seeds are not used to completely drying out.





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Mama's Boys will remain on the stem for a while, often for weeks.

Shakers drop seeds very close to the mother plant, when shaken loose by the wind or a passing critter. Usually a Mama's Boy, unless strong weather occurs.



Beaks are a subset of the shaker group, with seed capsules that split open like a beak when the seeds are ripe. Collect when beaks are open.

Crumby Coneheads are cone-shaped or thimble-shaped. Softer than standard coneheads, they crumble when ripe and are easily stripped by hand.

Shattering seeds can be tough to visually judge for ripeness. Use a *gentle* touch test to see if the seeds easily loosen. Spring seeds remain green (perhaps for camouflage) and swell slightly. Fall seeds typically turn brown or beige when ripe. Often found in colonies, these seeds do not travel far on their own. Some of these species drop quickly & are not Mama's Boys.

Hitchhikers are easy to tell when ripe – they hitch a ride on your pants! Color can be an indicator, but not always.



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Spring Beauty

Claytonia virginica

PORTULACACEAE

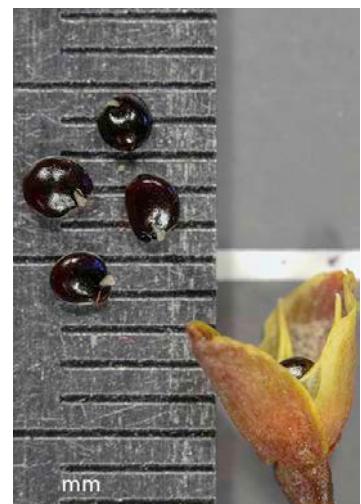


Photo: 5-22-18

Beaks. Elaiosomes. One of the first spring flowers, with pink stripes! In seed, it looks like a bunch of tiny duckbills along the stem. Inside the duckbills are capsules that will split open to drop out the seed. Collect the stem when at least one of the capsules is open; the rest will open in the bag. Good for shade gardens (consider as an alternative to Siberian squill). This plant goes dormant in summer.

Common Oak Sedge
aka
Penn Sedge

Carex pensylvanica

CYPERACEAE

CAREX: ACROCYSTIS

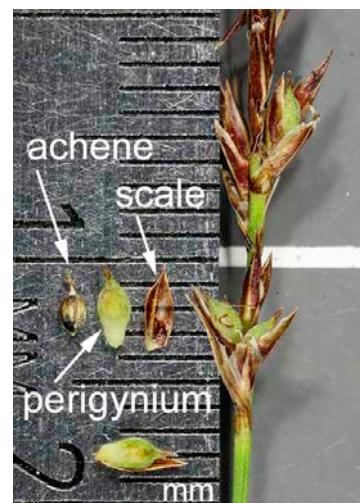


Photo: 6-2-18

Shattering. A wonderful woodland “lawn” that grows to about 6” tall. Penn sedge is reportedly poor from seed. The truth is that these seeds MUST be sown right away. Look for round beads, check with the touch test for ripeness. Spreads easily through vegetative reproduction.

Bloodroot

Sanguinaria canadensis

PAPAVERACEAE



Photo: 6-8-18

Elaiosomes. One of the earliest flowers, cheery bright white blooms pop up and the leaves unfurl a little later. The elaiosome is obvious in bloodroot, like a white gummy worm. Wear gloves to prevent the pod’s yellow sap staining your fingers. Collect open capsules. Can give swollen pods (~ ½” wide) a *gentle* squeeze to see if it pops open to reveal the wine-colored seeds.





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Wild Geranium

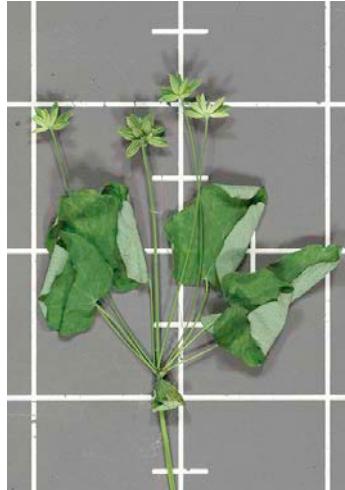
*Geranium maculatum*

GERANIACEAE

Photo: 6-13-17

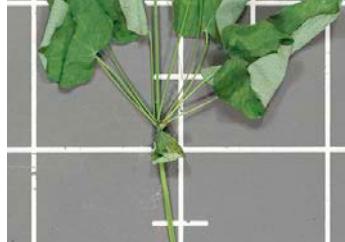
Ballistic. Purple spring flowers, an occasionally a few bonus blooms in fall. Geranium (aka cranesbill) in seed looks like a bird's long beak with 5 bumps at the bottom. The beak is actually composed of 5 ladies that turn brown, then spring up to catapult the seeds away. Collect brown bills; once it looks like a chandelier it has already flung away the seed.

Rue Anemone

*Anemonella thalictroides*

RANUNCULACEAE

Photo: 6-15-18



Jacob's Ladder

Polemonium reptans

POLEMONIACEAE

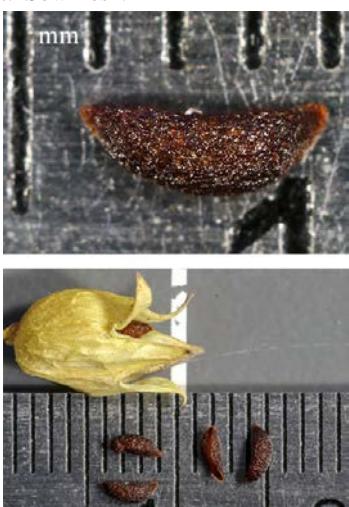


Photo: 6-15-18

Beaks. Inside the papery "Chinese lantern" is a capsule that slowly turns from green to beige-yellow, and then opens to drop the seeds. Shortly before opening, capsule becomes a little translucent and the brown-burgundy color of the seeds becomes visible. Peel back the papery lantern to check, and collect when the capsule is yellow-beige or translucent. Sweet purple flowers, leaves are parallel like ladder rungs.



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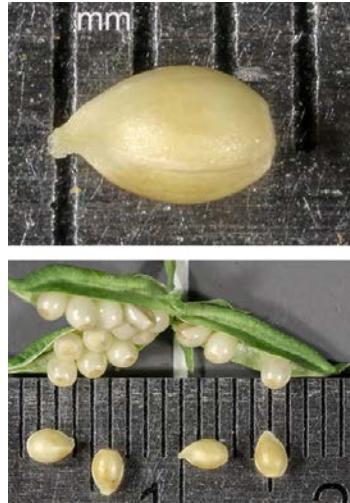
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Smooth
Yellow Violet

Viola pubescens
var. *scabriuscula*

VIOLACEAE

Photo: 6-23-18



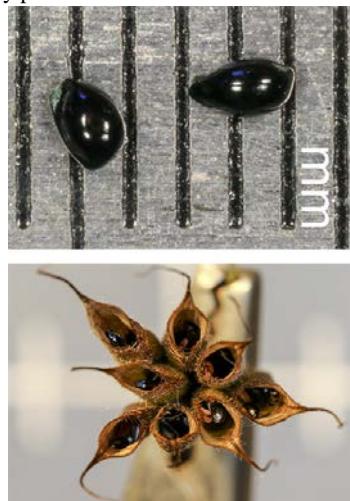
Ballistic. Some violet species have seed pods on stalks, others are stalkless, like this one. For stalkless pods: check with a *gentle* squeeze or look for split capsules. For stalked pods: the pod starts out nodding towards the ground, then raises its head to the sky, and finally splits and catapults the seed away. Capsules will ripen at slightly different times, on the same plant. Good for many pollinators.

Wild Columbine

Aquilegia canadensis

RANUNCULACEAE

Photo: 6-24-17



Beaks. The native columbine has bold red and yellow flowers. The seed capsules look somewhat like the flower, but upside down. Collect when beaks open to reveal the oil-black seeds. The beaks will turn colors too, but the open beak is a more important indicator that seed is ready for harvest. Short-lived perennial, most often grown in full sun to part shade. Bumblebees perform acrobatics to pollinate upside down.

Reflexed Wild Ginger

Asarum canadense
var. *reflexum*

ARISTOLOCHIACEAE

Photo: 6-24-18



Elaiosomes. The spade-shaped leaves make a lovely native groundcover. Burgundy flowers are hidden under the leaves, right on top of the soil. Capsules degrade into a mealy mess; collect when soft & mushy. Plants also divide & transplant easily from the shallow roots. Shade.



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Woodland Phlox

Phlox divaricata

POLEMONIACEAE



Photo: 6-24-17

Ballistic. Like garden variety phlox, the wild species have 5 petals. The blue-purple petals drop, revealing hard capsules tucked in the center of the 5 sepals. Capsules swell & turn green-beige, before splitting into 3 pieces & shooting the dark seeds away. Sepals often peel backwards like a star shortly before catapulting. After flowers start to fade, cover with mesh hoods to capture seeds

Prairie Woolly Sedge

Carex pellita

CYPERACEAE

CAREX: PALUDOSAE



Photo: 7-3-19

Shattering. This sedge is notable for its woolly (like peach fuzz) seeds. Seed color is variable – pale green, yellow, or purplish before drying to a muted brown. Common in wetlands and plays well with other natives; a good option for dense rain gardens or wetland edges.

Curly-styled Wood Sedge

Carex rosea

CYPERACEAE

CAREX: PHAESTOGLOCHIN

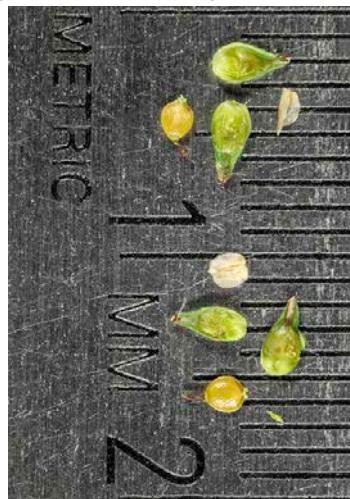


Photo: 7-6-2018

Shattering. One of the “star sedges.” A sister species, straight-styled wood sedge, is also sold at native nurseries. They look VERY similar, but this one has curly styles (see inset circle). Either species is great to have. Both grow in shade. Both grow in medium moisture soils, although this one can tolerate slightly drier soils too. Seeds strip off easily by hand when ripe.



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Common Spiderwort

Tradescantia ohiensis

COMMELINACEAE



Photo: 7-10-17

Beaks. Mama's Boy. Each flower reportedly blooms for a single morning, closing in the sunny afternoon. Luckily each stalk has dozens of flowers, extending the season of this royal purple beauty. Seeds also ripen sequentially; Mama's Boy due to weeks seed formation. Look for sepals changing from green to brown; target heads with at least 50% brown. Snip stalks. Sap can be itchy, but soap & water stops the itch.

Prairie Trillium
aka
Red Trillium

Trillium recurvatum

TRILLIACEAE

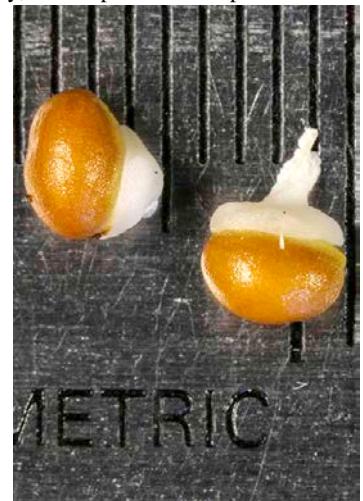


Photo: 7-23-18

Elaiosomes. The quintessential trillium with maroon-red petals around black anthers. Leaves are mottled shades of green. Happiest in some shade; they can tolerate full sun but often fade away faster without shade. Look for yellow-ish capsules, they will be slightly soft and easily pop off the stem. Takes 2 years to germinate, and may take additional years before starting to flower.

Shooting Star

Dodecatheon meadia

PRIMULACEAE



Photo: 7-29-17

Beaks. Look for brown & open capsules. Capsules start off green-yellow and nodding, then raise to the sky, then turn brown, and finally open. Seeds are tiny. Germination is high, but survival past seedling stage is low due to damping off. Takes several years to flower.



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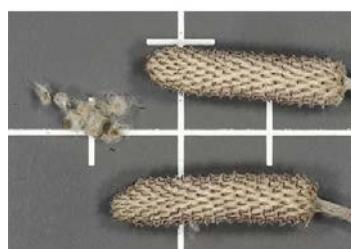
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Thimbleweed

Anemone cylindrica

RANUNCULACEAE

Photo: 8-1-17



Crumby coneheads. The thimble-shaped cone fluffs up into a soft, cottony cloud. Look for loose cotton, strips easily by hand when ripe. *A. virginiana* has leaves that are less deeply lobed, thimbles are less slender (more like gumdrops), and typically found in partial to full shade.

White Wild Indigo

Baptisia lactea

FABACEAE

Photo: 8-6-18



Beaks. Mama's Boy. Black pods split open to release seeds, ranging in color from chestnut to caramel to mustard. Wild populations may have weevils, but this is unlikely in home gardens. Collect charcoal-black pods. Open up a few immediately to look for weevils. If weevils are present, store in a ziploc and place in the freezer; weevils will hibernate instead of eating your seeds.

Brown Fox Sedge

Carex vulpinoidea

CYPERACEAE

CAREX:
MULTIFLORAE

Photo: 8-8-2017



Shattering. Sedges are like grasses but with triangular stems. There are several fox sedge species readily available; they have long bristly clusters of seed. This one is a good option for rain gardens. Seeds will be brown when ripe, strip them off the stem by hand.



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Pale Purple Coneflower

Echinacea pallida

ASTERACEAE



Photo: 8-8-18

Coneheads. Mama's Boy. Purple coneflowers have been the poster child of native gardens – pretty and great for pollinators! Snip dark heads, ideally when a few seeds have fallen out of the conehead. This species has candy corn seeds with a chocolate stripe, other species are solid gray. The sturdy spiky heads are protective of the seeds. Use thick gloves, pliers, or a short soak in water (then dry the seeds well).

Blue Flag

Iris virginica var.
shrevei

IRIDACEAE



Photo: 8-16-18

Beaks. Our only native iris, the lovely blue flag transforms to terra cotta colored seeds stacked within a banana-like pod. Collect *open* banana peels. Flower parts & seeds are in groups of 3s & 6s, a trait showing their distant relation to the lily group. Rain garden beauty.

Bottlebrush Grass

Hystrrix patula

POACEAE

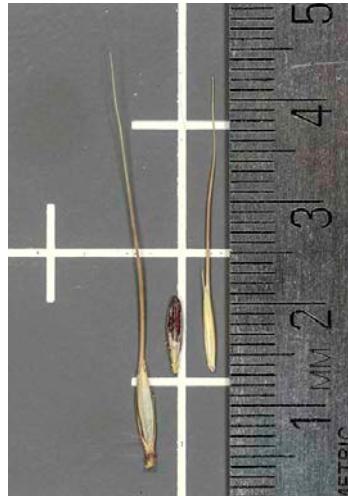


Photo: 8-16-17

Shattering. Mama's Boy. A staple in woodland restoration and with a unique "bottle brush" arrangement, forming an X from above. Strip beige seed by hand but wear gloves; the knobs where the seeds attach can be rough if collecting a large quantity.



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Butterfly Weed

Asclepias tuberosa

ASCLEPIADACEAE



Photo: 8-24-17

Milkweed. Bright orange flowers are great for pollinator gardens! Collect when the vertical seam in pod starts to split open. Can check with a *gentle* squeeze, the seeds must be brown inside. Milkweeds are tough to process. Best to clean them fresh (before fluff dries & expands).

Golden Alexanders

Zizia aurea

APIACEAE



Photo: 8-25-17



Shattering. This common parsley-relative has bright yellow flowers that become green seeds and finally ripen to brown. Collect when easy to strip by hand. Most often mesic to wet-mesic prairies, but can be in open woodlands, savannas, prairies, and fens, from wet to dry.

Starry Campion

Silene stellata

CARYOPHYLLACEAE



Photo: 8-28-18



Beaks. This lovely plant can be found in healthy savannas, open woods, and sometimes wet-mesic prairies. The flower is a white fringed star. A papery shell surrounds the capsules. Collect beige capsules. Good for light shade gardens, happiest with tall friends.



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Wood Mint

Blephilia hirsuta

LAMIACEAE



Photo: 8-28-19

Shakers. Like *Monarda* and many other mints, seeds are held in "tubes" (the calyx). Tip into your hand, seeds will fall out if ripe. There are similar species; this one has a minty odor when leaves are crushed, and likes a little shade.

White Baneberry

aka

Doll's Eyes

Actaea pachypoda

RANUNCULACEAE



Photo: 8-31-18

Berries. An awesomely creepy plant, the common name is very appropriate. Collect when berries are white-ish. As with any plant called a "bane," this is not one you want to eat. Good in woodland gardens. A lovely cluster of white flowers in late spring.

Purple Prairie Clover

Dalea purpurea

FABACEAE

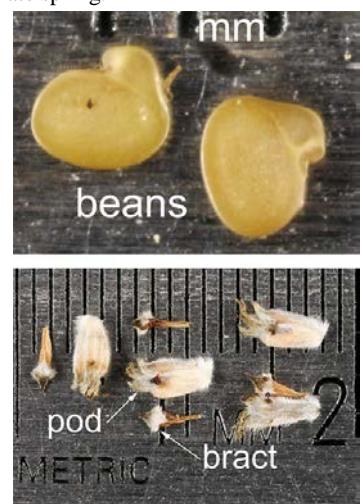


Photo: 8-31-17

Crumby Coneheads. Purple prairie clover & white prairie clover create little tutus of flowers, blooming from bottom to top of the column. Both like dry sunny spots and can be grown together. White prairie clover seeds are enclosed in a dry papery hull, black & tan colored; Purple has fuzzy hulls, gray-peachy colored. Seeds do not need be de-hulled, especially if sown outside in fall.



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Wild Bergamot

Monarda fistulosa

LAMIACEAE



Photo: 9-7-17

Shakers. Mama's Boy. A lavender firework of flowers found in prairies & savannas. Leaves have an odor similar to the citrus fruit of the same name (popular as an essential oil & in Earl Gray tea). Lavender florets drop off, leaving the tube-shaped calyx behind. Tip the head into your hand, seeds fall out when ripe. Popular with many pollinators, including monarchs and the endangered rusty patched bumblebee.

Yellow Coneflower
aka
Gray-headed
Coneflower

Ratibida pinnata

ASTERACEAE



Photo: 9-7-17

Crumby Coneheads. Mama's Boy. Ripe seeds easily crumble & can be stripped by hand. The seeds are graphite-gray, tucked between lighter gray/beige chaff. Seeds have a refreshing odor, usually described as citrus-like. Bright yellow flowers, good for dense sunny gardens.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit

Arisaema triphyllum

ARACEAE

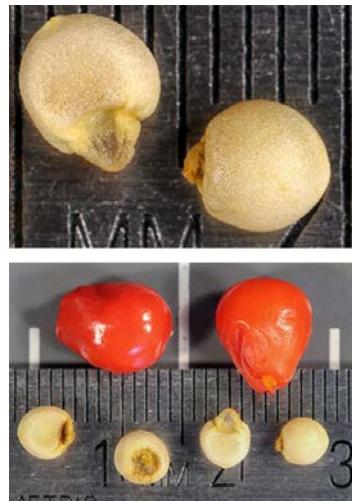


Photo: 9-7-18

Berries. Mama's Boy. Best known for the 3 leaflets & namesake flower, but leaves are often gone by harvest. The aggregate fruits resemble a tomato-red raspberry on steroids. Jack grows in mesic and moist woods. The juice can reportedly cause skin & stomach irritation; wear gloves to remove the seeds. (You can sow the seeds with the fruits on, but a critter may move the seed.)



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Tall Bellflower

Campanulastrum americanum

CAMPANULACEAE

Photo: 9-10-17



Showy Ticktrefoil

Desmodium canadense

FABACEAE

Photo: 9-11-17



Hitchhikers. Mama's Boy. Pink flowers turn into chains of velcro-like seeds; people have mistaken these hitchhikers for ticks. Trefoil refers to 3 parts to the foliage. De-hulling is not necessary, especially with fall sowing. Collect when they hitchhike. Good for pollinators...but consider carefully if your garden will have children or pets running through them in fall.

Prairie Dropseed

Sporobolus heterolepis

POACEAE

Photo: 9-12-17



Shattering. Big fountains of grass blades make this the most ornamental-looking native prairie grass. Smells like movie theater popcorn on warm summer days. Seed is easily stripped by hand when ripe. Best sown within 6 months of harvest. Decent germination, but slow to reach mature width; installing plants can be preferred over seed.



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Smooth Solomon's Seal

Polygonatum biflorum

CONVALLARIACEAE



Photo: 9-16-19

Berries. Mama's Boy. True Solomon's Seal species hides its flowers under the leaves, with a "blueberry" fruit. This is the more common of the "true" species, with smooth leaves. Deer candy (like many lily-relatives) and may need protection if the garden is visited by wildlife.

Feathery False Solomon's Seal

Smilacina racemosa

CONVALLARIACEAE

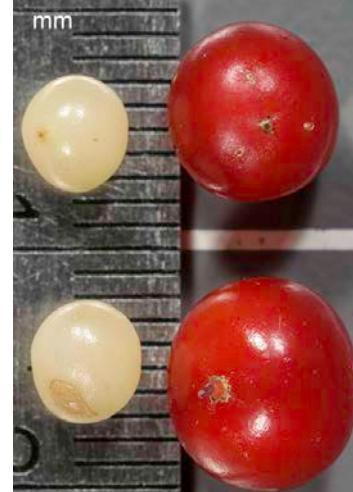


Photo: 9-15-18

Berries. Mama's Boy. False Solomon leaves look very similar to "true," but the flowers/fruit are clustered at the terminal end of the plant and ripe berries are red. Collect clusters that are mostly red; speckled red berries are half-ripe. Good in woodland gardens, along with "true."

Woodland Sunflower

Helianthus divaricatus

ASTERACEAE



Photo: 9-16-19

Coneheads. Most native sunflowers are prone to weedy behavior, so use them thoughtfully. Provides food for butterflies & birds, can make an excellent shady edge, but not recommended for delicate woodlands or small shade gardens.



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Side-oats Grama

*Bouteloua
curtipendula*

POACEAE



Photo: 9-19-17

Shattering. Seeds dangle towards one side of the stem, typically pointing toward the ground at harvest time. Vibrant red anthers are stunning & a beautiful reminder that grasses bloom too! A short grass (1-3' tall). Seeds are beige & easy to strip by hand when ripe. Full sun.

Virginia Wild Rye

Elymus virginicus

POACEAE

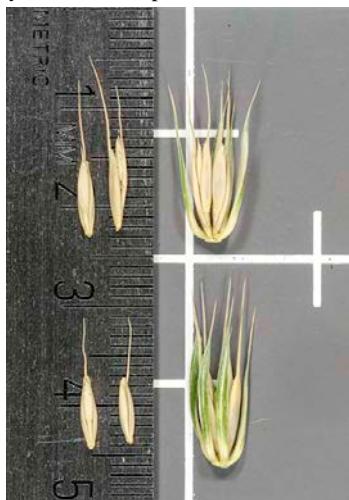


Photo: 9-20-17

Shattering. Seeds are tightly packed & upright, like an idealized wheat stalk. The base of the seed spike is typically wrapped by the leaf sheath. Collect beige seeds; don't be deterred by the green bracts (see last pic). Grows in full sun to light shade, medium moisture.

Flat-top Aster

*Doellingeria
umbellata*

ASTERACEAE



Photo: 9-20-17

Fluffy. Mama's Boy. An option for the edges of rain gardens, this species likes to be near water (medium to squishy soils) but not flooded. White flowers are good for pollinators. Can tolerate a little shade but happier in full sun. Seed fluff is colored off-white. Collect when fluffy.



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Nodding Wild Onion

Allium cernuum

ALLIACEAE



Photo: 9-20-17

Beaks. Globes of *Allium* flowers are familiar to gardeners; this native one has little flowers that can be pale purple to white. The main stem has a bend right behind the head, inspiring the common name. Look for clusters to split open in 3s, revealing the black seeds inside.

Cardinal Flower

Lobelia cardinalis

LOBELIACEAE



Photo: 9-27-17

Beaks. The bold red flowers make this species a favorite of hummingbirds & humans alike. Look for light brown capsules that open with 2 chambers (like a pig nose). A pretty choice for rain gardens, and often paired with its sister – great blue lobelia. All *Lobelia* species have teeny-tiny seeds: 500,000 - 900,000 seeds/ounce. Short lived perennials, make sure to keep some seed to replenish your garden.

Common Mountain Mint

Pycnanthemum virginianum

LAMIACEAE



Photo: 9-27-17

Shakers. The first *Pycnanthemum* species was named in the mountains; our species carry over the name despite our flatlander habitats. This common species happily lives from dry-mesic to wet conditions & supports a wide variety of pollinators. Look for grayish heads; tip them into your hand & seeds will easily spill out of the clustered tubes when ripe. Smells lovely!



Lake County Seed Collection Guide

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For Native Gardeners

Kelly Schultz¹, Dale Shields²

version 1 8/2021

¹Lake County Forest Preserve District, ²Volunteer Stewardship Network

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Foxglove Beard Tongue

Penstemon digitalis

SCROPHULARIACEAE

Photo: 9-28-18



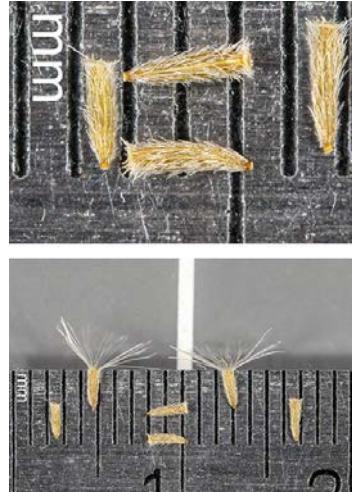
Beaks. White trumpet flowers are attractive in full sun to part shade. Leaves can take on red or purple hues in fall. Look for rusty-brown pods that have split open. The pods are particularly hard; use strong rolling pins or stomping to release the seeds.

Zig-zag Goldenrod

Solidago flexicaulis

ASTERACEAE

Photo: 9-30-17



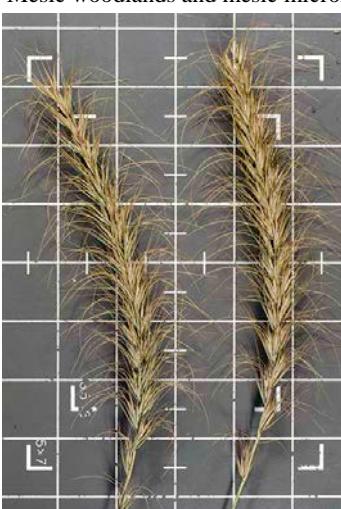
Fluffy. Mama's Boy. This species has flowers/seeds in the clusters of the leaf axils (where stems & leaves meet). Leaves are broad serrated ovals with a point at the tip. Stem has a slight zigzag between axils. Mesic woodlands and mesic microhabitats in wetter woods.

Canada Wild Rye

Elymus canadensis

POACEAE

Photo: 10-2-17



Shattering. This common grass will grow just about anywhere and is a fantastic native cover crop - fast to grow, but gives way in a few years to more conservative species. Easily ID'd by the long tails on the seed, which resembles a frizzy ponytail from a distance. Spike typically starts straight, but curves late in the season. Easy to strip by hand when ripe.



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New England Aster

Sympphyotrichum novae-angliae

ASTERACEAE

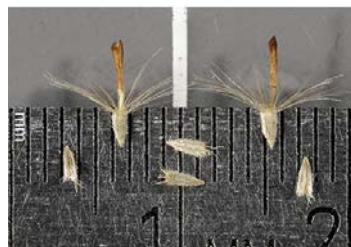


Photo: 10-4-17

Fluffy. Mama's Boy. A versatile aster, this species grows in full sun to partial shade, wet to dry-mesic soils. One of only a few native asters with vibrant royal purple flowers; it is rare to see other colors in natural populations of this species. Leaves clasp the stem. The pappus (seed fluff) is cinnamon brown.

Elm-leaved Goldenrod

Solidago ulmifolia

ASTERACEAE



Photo: 10-4-17

Fluffy. Mama's Boy. Flowers are on long branching arms, like exploding fireworks. Leaves are broader than many goldenrods, but a far cry from an elm leaf. Part shade to full shade, good for pollinators.

Obedient Plant

Physostegia virginiana

LAMIACEAE



Photos: 9-15-19, 10-6-19

Shakers. Mama's Boy. Obedient plant gets its name from the way flowers can be spun around the stalk to obediently stay pointed in another direction! Fun to play with. The flowers bloom from bottom to top of the stalk; seeds ripen in the same sequence. Up to 4 seeds per cup. Collect when seeds are fully brown; cup color is unimportant. Common to have mix of plump viable seed and wrinkly empty seed.



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Smooth Blue Aster

Symphyotrichum laeve

ASTERACEAE



Photo: 10-9-17

Fluffy. Mama's Boy. Light blue-lavender flowers, loved by pollinators. A waxy blue-green color to the stem and leaves, especially early in the season. Leaves with a smooth, almost rubbery feel. Upper leaves are smaller than lower ones. Loves medium to dry, full sun to part shade. Pappus (seed fluff) is off-white, usually tinged with amber or rose. Collect when fluffy.

Common Milkweed

Asclepias syriaca

ASCLEPIADACEAE

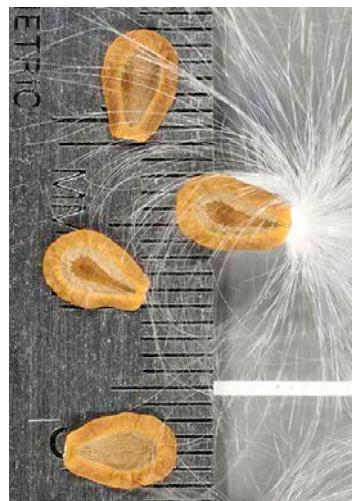


Photo: 10-9-17

Milkweed. Of all native milkweeds, this one is the favorite of monarchs. Pink globes of flowers, adaptable to a lot of soils. Spreads by runners too, recommended for wild gardens rather than manicured beds. They are ripe when the pod splits; ignore the pod color. This is by far the most common species and can be identified by the large pods, covered with soft hooks. Leaves are fuzzy underneath.

Swamp Milkweed

Asclepias incarnata

ASCLEPIADACEAE



Photo: 10-9-18

Milkweed. A good choice for rain gardens, with bright pink flowers. Seed pods are finger-wide, similar to butterfly weed, but those pods have peach fuzz and this one has smooth pods. Collect split pods. Best to strip the seeds promptly or else sow the seed with the fluff attached.



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Closed Gentian
aka
Bottle Gentian

Gentiana andrewsii

GENTIANACEAE

Photos: 9-28-18, 10-14-18



Aromatic Aster

Symphytum oblongifolium

ASTERACEAE

Photo: 10-16-17

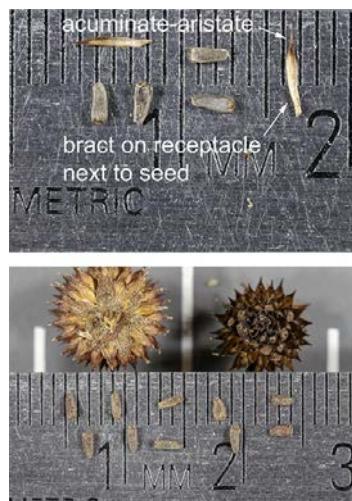


Brown-eyed Susan

Rudbeckia triloba

ASTERACEAE

Photo: 10-25-17



Coneheads. Mama's Boy. The name is apparent after the conehead is empty of seeds. Snip heads that are dark - almost black - or crumble to see if seeds come out. This species is happiest in part shade, but can grow in sun to shade. Its sister black-eyed Susan is happiest in full sun.



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Sweet Black-eyed Susan

Rudbeckia subtomentosa

ASTERACEAE

Photo: 10-25-17



Little Bluestem

Schizachyrium scoparium

POACEAE

Photo: 10-25-17

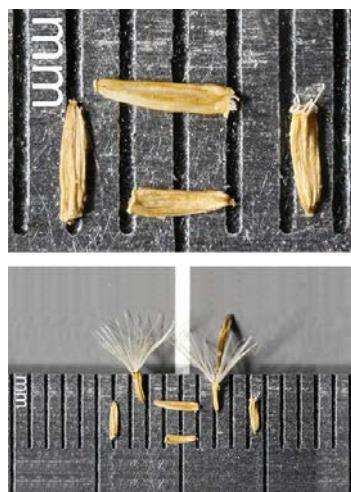


Showy Goldenrod

Solidago speciosa

ASTERACEAE

Photo: 10-25-17



Fluffy. Mama's Boy. Aptly named, this is the showiest of the native goldenrods and the best suited for native gardening. Grows in little clumps, and the stems are typically a bold crimson late in the season. Yellow flowers are arranged in a Christmas tree shape, seeds have white fluff. When fluffy, strip by hand.



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Short's Aster

*Symphyotrichum
shortii*

ASTERACEAE

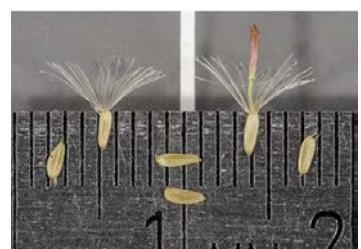


Photo: 10-26-18

Fluffy. Mama's Boy. Pale blue-lavender flowers with heart-shaped leaves, good for pollinators. This species loves mesic to dry woodlands and savannas. Seed fluff is tan. Collect when fluffy – strip by hand.

Turtlehead

Chelone glabra

SCROPHULARIACEAE



Photo: 10-29-17

Beaks. Reportedly named for the white flower's resemblance to a turtle's head, but the seed capsule is arguably a better inspiration for the name. Capsules are initially green with a distinct closed mouth (seam), which splits and opens up. Seeds are small papery "fried eggs" and shake out on windy days. Collect open capsules. Important host plant for Baltimore Checkerspot butterflies. Good for rain gardens.

Prairie Gay Feather
aka
Prairie Blazing Star

Liatris pycnostachya

ASTERACEAE

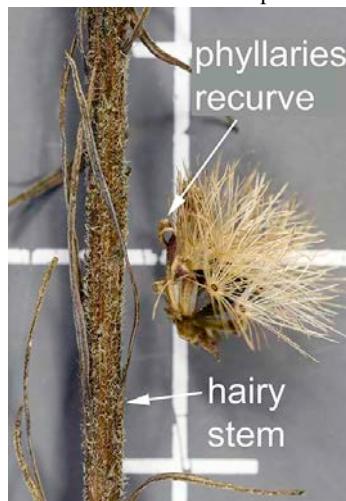


Photo: 10-29-19

Fluffy. There are many blazing star aka *Liatris* species, and all are generally attractive to humans and butterflies. Most of them resemble this species, with a densely packed column of pink-purple flowers than ripen to seed with tawny fluff. Collect fluffy seed.