



High Value Generalist Plants for Every Garden: Full Sun Mesic (medium moisture) to Dry

Here is mostly the province of meadows, dominated by grasses and forbs flowering in summer and fall. Grasses are the dominant species in almost all mesic to dry meadows in our region, so we recommend a good proportion of the planted material represent our native grasses.

Not all gardens in full sun need to look like meadows with their dense, heterogenous mix of species. There is plenty of room to use these species in an artful design – creating an intentional-looking garden is much more a function of layout than species choice. However, we recommend highlighting these common robust species as they're easy to get established and provide excellent wildlife value.

In late successional meadows and old fields, you might get some trees and shrubs recolonizing the meadow. In larger areas, these can be critical bird nesting habitat so if you wish to include those, we've added some recommendations below.

Grasses:

- *Andropogon virginicus* (Broomsedge) – emerges when soils warm up, somewhat shade tolerant
- *Elymus glaberrimus* (Southeastern Wildrye) – emerges earlier than the others here
- *Eragrostis spectabilis* (Purple Lovegrass) – our shortest common meadow grass. The seed heads can detach and roll around, so if that's a concern they can be gently raked out in the late fall.
- *Schizachyrium scoparium* (Little Bluestem) – very similar in appearance to Broomsedge, often dry meadows contain stands of both. In our experience, somewhat less shade tolerant than Broomsedge.
- *Sorghastrum nutans* (Indian grass) – tall with showy glaucous (blue-ish cast) leaves and culms and showy coppery seeds. Seems to establish readily in new meadows.
- *Tridens flavus* (Purpletop) – tolerates a lot of disturbance, you can see populations in median strips. Generally happiest in drier or well-drained sites but will pop up in wetter meadows too.

Forbs:

- *Pycnanthemum tenuifolium* (Narrow-leaf Mountain Mint)
- *Pycnanthemum incanum* (Hoary Mountain Mint)
- *Rudbeckia hirta* (Black-eyed Susan)
- *Rudbeckia fulgida* (Orange Coneflower) – primarily in the Piedmont
- *Solidago juncea* (Early Goldenrod)
- *Solidago nemoralis* (Gray Goldenrod)
- *Asclepias syriaca* (Common Milkweed)



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- *Eupatorium hyssopifolium* (Hyssop-leaved Boneset)
- *Symphyotrichum patens* (Late Purple Aster)
- *Symphyotrichum dumosum/pilosum/lateriflorum* – these can be tricky to identify down to species, but some late-flowering white aster is a common constituent and useful to late season pollinators

Successional trees and shrubs:

- *Rhus* spp. (Sumacs) – Staghorn (*R. typhina*) and Smooth Sumacs (*R. glabra*) will grow quickly and colonize area. The fruit are valuable to various birds and the open structure will still allow you to garden around them.
- *Juniperus virginiana* (Eastern Redcedar) – Eventually will reach canopy size, but do so slowly. The dense foliage is great cover for birds.
- *Hypericum* spp. (St. John's Worts) – Shrubby St. John's Wort (*H. prolificum*) and St. Andrew's Cross (*H. stragulum*) do well on dry meadows and meadow-forest ecotones. *H. stragulum* does especially well in thin acidic soils and underneath open canopy of pines or upland oaks.