

A Baker's Dozen From an Evaluation of Native Midwestern Plants for Use in the Golf Course Landscape

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The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, and the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation have funded a three-year study to evaluate the suitability of 56 native plants in unmowed, out-of-play portions of three Chicago-area golf courses. My thanks go out to Scott Witte of Cantigny Golf Club, Dave Ward of Olympia Fields Country Club, and Don Cross of Skokie Country Club for allowing me to conduct this work at their facilities. Following two seasons of evaluation, here are 13 great natives to try at your course:

Full Sun



Side-oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)

This warm season grass produces dull, blue-green, 15-inch high foliage and is topped in late summer with one-sided seed heads. Particularly tolerant of drier sites, use this grass in masses in areas close to golfers' view. In this area, it is found in hill prairies and sandy hills and roadsides.



Rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*)

Upright, narrow, yucca-like foliage grows below the silver-white, prickly, globe-shaped flowers that are borne in July and August. Growing to 5 feet, it occurs in prairie remnants.



False sunflower (*Heliopsis helianthoides*)

This 5-foot-tall member of the aster family produces deep golden-yellow disk and ray flowers that occur singly or in clusters throughout July and August. In the Chicago area, it is found in disturbed prairie remnants and at the edge of woodlands.

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Common mountain mint
(*Pycnanthemum virginianum*).
Appearing shrubby, this 3-foot-tall forb can be covered with white flowers throughout July and August. It is found in unshaded grass communities and moist prairies, and also in moist alkaline areas.

Common ironweed
(*Vernonia fasciculata*).
The deep purple flowers that appear in July and August are attractive atop 4- to 6-foot-tall stems. An aggressive plant, this native may require competition to keep it in bounds. In the Chicago area, it occurs in moist open area.

Open Shade



Straight-styled wood sedge (*Carex radiata*)
The fine-textured foliage is an appeal of this diminutive 10-inch sedge. Golden flowers appear in June. Try massing this in lightly shaded areas. It grows naturally in moist woodlands.



Bottlebush grass (*Hystrix patula*)
The long-awned florets appearing on 4-inch-long spikes give this plant its name. Approximately 3 feet tall, it is often seen in woodlands or its edges.



Great blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)
Light-to-medium blue flowers during September put on a late-season show. This 2-foot-tall native occurs in moist ground, alkaline wetlands, and sandy pond shores.

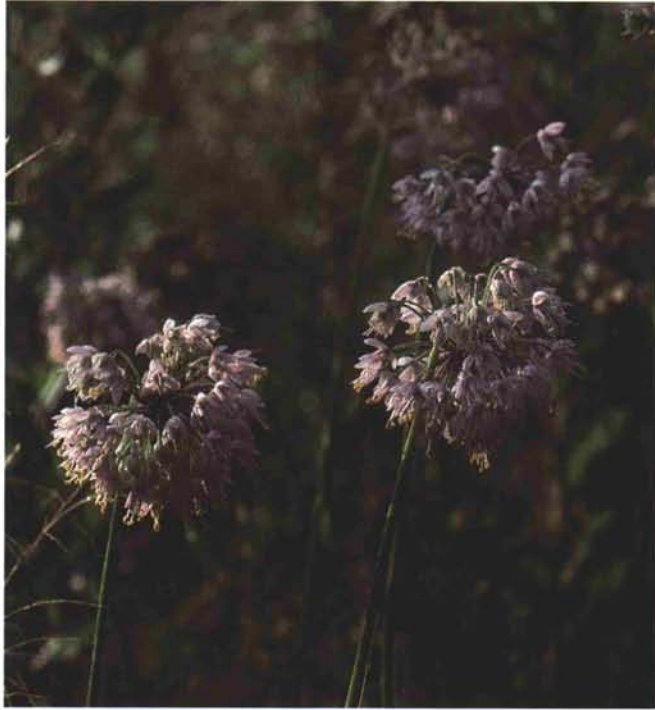


Brown-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia triloba*)
The attractive yellow ray and brown disk flowers in late summer are the appeal of this 3-foot-tall native. It can be found in partially shaded, moist areas and shaded edges of vacant lots or fields.



Spike grass or Northern Sea Oats
(*Uniola latifolia* and *Chasmanthium latifolium*)
The oatlike, two-dimensionally appearing seeds and its ability to survive modest shade are among the appeals of this 3- to 5-foot-tall grass. Flowering in August, it may self-seed into adjacent areas. It is a native of shaded flood plains, and disturbed prairies.

Full Sun to Open Shade




Nodding wild onion (*Allium cernuum*)

This showy native grows to 1 to 2 feet tall and forms drooping white-pink flowers in July and August. It is a native of woodlands, flood plains, and disturbed prairies.



New England aster (*Aster novae-angliae*)

This member of the aster family grows in a variety of locations and may reach to 5 feet tall. It has purple or blue ray flowers surrounding the gold-yellow disk flowers. It can be invasive, spreading by seed, and it normally occurs in moist prairies, meadows, and prairie remnants. 



Tufted Hair Grass

(*Deschampsia caespitosa*)

A cosmopolitan plant, this cool season grass can grow in sun or light shade. Deep green foliage grows at the plant's base, while the 3-foot-tall airy panicles are found in late spring and early summer. As the mature, the inflorescences become golden brown. It is a native of moist areas.



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