

## **Native Plant Species vs. Introduced Species - What you should know.**

Have you ever wondered what the botanical plant names indicate? Simply put, they call out the genus, species and sometimes the cultivar of that plant. Very often, you will see the terms 'chinensis' or 'japonica' as the species name, amongst others. What this indicates, is that their origin is either Asian or European. Over time, many of these 'introduced' species have found their way to the United States. This may have been via plant expeditions sponsored by horticultural entities, or other parties in which individuals scour geographical regions for plants that they feel would be a welcome addition to the provincial plant vocabulary. Throughout history, it was considered a status symbol to own a collection of 'exotic' plant species. What we have learned is that this practice can wreak havoc on our natural ecology.

What we have found, that in many cases introduced species not only thrive in our landscape, but overrun the entire indigenous eco-system and catastrophically disrupt our entire ecological infrastructure. Most of the woodland fragments we have left, have been overrun by invasive plant species, crowding out native plants, and breaking down the entire fragile natural order of our ecology. This is the case throughout the US.

There are many direct and subtle benefits to planting native plants. They support the beneficial insects, birds, and wildlife that we share spaces with. The food chain starts with plants. One example is that berries from natives tend to have a high fat content, which benefits migratory birds. There are no limitations to the seasonal aesthetic presence of a native garden including the wintertime as well.

So next time you decide to install landscape plantings, please make sure you are asking 'are they native'? You will be contributing to the restoration of our ecology!!

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