

Plant This, NOT That!

American Holly (left), not 'Nellie R. Stevens' Holly (right)



Upright, evergreen hollies are a popular plant in many gardens. Used as foundation plants, to soften the corner of a building, to flank an entrance or as a privacy screen, hollies are an appropriate choice for an array of locations.

But for some reason, many gardeners opt for a hybrid holly, like 'Nellie R. Stevens' holly (*Ilex* x '*Nellie R. Stevens*')

Instead they should choose our **Native American holly**. With its spiny, green leaves, bright red berries and natural conical shape, American holly really is the quintessential holly. It has all the garden design characteristics of hybrid hollies, but is more wildlife-friendly. **Bluebirds, northern cardinals, woodpeckers** and **cedar waxwings** are just a few of the birds that eat the berries or use American holly for shelter. It is also a larval host plant for **Henry's Elfin Butterfly**.

Joe Pye (left), or Summersweet (center), not Butterfly Bush (right)



Every garden needs a few summer-blooming shrubs to help transition the garden from the exuberance of spring to the subtleties of fall. Sadly, one of the most popular summer-blooming shrubs, Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*), is becoming invasive in many areas. Sure, its nectar is attractive to butterflies, but it does not support any other insect life, and

is taking over fragile ecosystems. Much more habitat-friendly alternatives are native **Joe Pye** (*Eupatorium*) and **Summersweet** (*Clethra alnifolia*). Summersweet is only available with white or pink flowers, but its intoxicating fragrance more than makes up for it. **Butterflies, bees** and **hummingbirds** find Summersweet irresistible. Several species of butterflies use it as a larval host plant. As a bonus, Summersweet blooms in shade and tolerates all but the most drought-prone areas.

Little Bluestem (left), not Maiden Grass (right)



Ornamental grasses are becoming increasingly popular for good reasons. They can be planted as specimens, part of a mixed bed or used in mass as a privacy screen.

Fast-growing and available in a variety of leaf colors and textures, grasses easily add graceful movement, a pop of color or a contrast of texture to any garden.

But for years, it seemed like the only ornamental grasses you could find in nurseries were non-native grasses, such as **Maiden Grass** (*Miscanthus sinensis*).

A more wildlife-friendly choice is our native **Little Bluestem** ([Schizachyrium scoparium](#)).

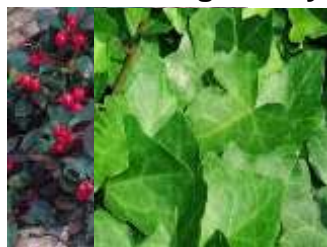
Little Bluestem's foliage is an eye-catching mix of blue, green, orange and red that turns a bright bronzy-orange in the fall and holds its color into the winter. Its fuzzy seed heads are a favorite food for **birds** and it provides shelter for nesting **birds** and **insects**. Little Bluestem is also a larval host plant for several types of butterflies, including [cobweb skipper](#), [dusted skipper](#) and [Peck's skipper](#).

Eastern Red Cedar, not Leyland Cypress.



Eastern Red Cedar is a wonderful native alternative to Leyland Cypress.

Alum Root, Lowbush Blueberry or Partridge Berry, not English ivy



Scarlet

Honeysuckle, not Tatarian honeysuckle



Winterberry (fe/male), not Barberry



Books:

[Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants](#), by C. Colston Burrell, is published by the [Brooklyn Botanic Garden](#) and is consistently one of the most popular native plant books for both novice and experienced native plant gardeners.

Links:

<http://www.ecosystemgardening.com>

<http://findnativeplants.com/new-england/connecticut-native-plants/>

