

## Full Sun-Wet Native Perennial Garden Kit

*For garden areas with 6+ hours of sun per day; poorly drained clay, which may remain wet for days at a time.*



**Marsh blazing star** *Liatris spicata*

*Height: 3' – 4'*

*Spacing at planting: 12" – 18"*

*Flower period: July – Aug.* Rose-purple flowers in a long terminal spike. Butterflies and native bees are attracted to the flowers. You may see four Monarchs feeding on one flower spike on a sunny fall day!

*Seed collection: Oct.*

*Propagation:* Seed can be stored in a cold, dry location (hang a bag from the ceiling of an unheated garage or shed) and sown in early spring when ground is ready. Or seed can be sown in fall.

*Notes on care:* Grass-like new growth in spring grows into tall stems with long, thin leaves. A single plant will expand in diameter over time to 12" – 15" if provided the space. *Liatris spicata* tolerates poor soil. It generally stays upright and needs no support. Like many other native plants, it may grow too fast and flop over if grown in too rich of a soil. Stems can be cut down to the ground in late fall. They are quite woody and rigid. If you do not keep a long-term, slow rot compost pile for more woody, slower to rot plant material, you may want to take them to your municipal composting facility.



**Obedient Plant** *Physostegia virginiana*

*Height: 3' – 4'*

*Spacing at planting: 24" – 36"*

*Flower period: July – Sept.* Lavender, pinkish or white spiky inflorescences. The individual florets are tubular and similar to snapdragons. Due to the showy flowers, this species was introduced into gardens early on. Nursery selections are usually pink but wild populations are usually white with light pink or purple tints. Because individual florets stay in place

(temporarily) after being pushed to reposition, this plant was given the common name, Obedient plant. Flowers are generally pollinated by bumblebees. Other long-tongued bees, hummingbirds and the occasional butterfly also sip nectar.

*Seed collection: Oct – Nov*

*Propagation:* Seed can be stored over winter in a cold, dry place (hang a bag from the ceiling of an unheated garage or shed). Sow in early spring. Obedient plant is not so obedient in the garden. It is in the mint family, and like other mints, it can spread quite aggressively by rhizomes.

*Notes on care:* Many consider this species to be invasive. It is more likely to grow aggressively in moist rich soil. This is a good thing when you have a sunny, consistently moist to wet area you want covered with something pretty. Obedient plant can be inter-planted with other natives, such as Swamp Milkweed, Marsh blazing star, Great Blue Lobelia, Bergamot, Virginia Mountain Mint, Ironweed, Turtlehead and Culver's Root. Natives have a way of working things out over time, especially if the soil is not too rich and is rarely fertilized with anything other than an occasional side dressing of compost (vegetable, not animal manure, based). If the area is shady, Obedient plant stems are likely to flop. During drought, the lower leaves may turn yellow and defoliate. Plants are pest resistant and are not palatable to deer.



**Swamp Milkweed** *Asclepias incarnata* (also called Rose Milkweed)

*Height:* 3' – 4'

*Spacing at planting:* 24" – 36"

*Flower period:* July – Aug. Red-pink flowers at top of stems. Pollinated by Monarch butterflies and many bee species. Visited, but not pollinated, by sphinx moths for nectar.

*Seed collection:* Oct. Long, thin pods turn from light green to light brown as seed ripens. Pods will eventually split open and the seeds will float away on their silky "parachutes." You can collect the pods once they are brown before or just as they split open and store them in a loosely closed paper bag until you are ready to use them. Bear in mind, the pods will open in the bag. Best to separate the seeds from their "parachute" before sowing so that the seeds drop exactly where you want them to drop.

*Propagation:* Seeds should be sown in early winter as they need cold, moist stratification for germination. If your ground is not ready and you need to hold the seeds until the following spring, you will need to stratify them in the refrigerator in a Ziploc bag, mixed with damp sand for at least 60 days. Sow by May 1 for best results. Rhizomes of Swamp milkweed can be divided from a large, mature parent plant for propagation (unlike Butterfly weed, *Asclepias tuberosa*, which has a deep tap root). Propagation by seed is easy for Swamp milkweed.

*Notes on care:* Can also grow in partial shade. Unlike Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) "plays well with others in the garden" and does not spread aggressively by rhizomes. It needs more moisture than other milkweeds, and it tolerates wet clay soil whereas other milkweeds do not. Aphids love Swamp milkweed so do not be alarmed if you see a cluster of them on your plant. If the plant is still small and young, it is best to brush the aphids off.