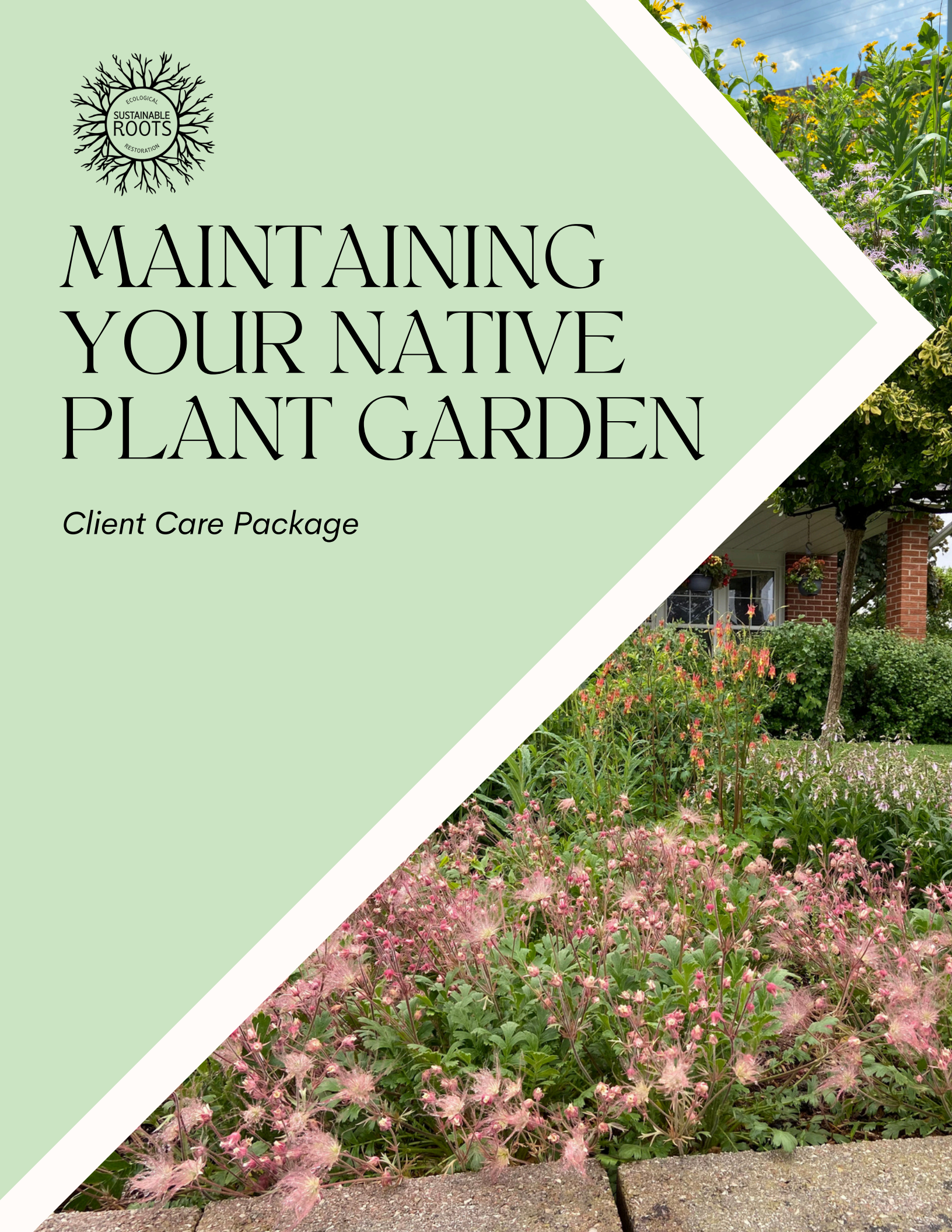




MAINTAINING YOUR NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

Client Care Package



WHY NATIVE PLANTS?

If you are choosing to install a garden, expand an existing garden, or restore an area of your yard, **why not** choose an option that is both beautiful AND ecologically beneficial? Native plants are regionally specific plants that are naturally occurring (aka NOT introduced by humans) and have co-evolved with local wildlife. They are an important food source for local birds and insects, they provide habitat for local animals, and some are even host plants for specific native insects. On a sustainability level, they require less resources than introduced species because they are adapted to survive in the local environment, and they do not require synthetic fertilizers or chemicals to help them grow. Your small garden can even help local greenspaces by providing a source of seed, which can help to re-populate and re-establish wild areas. And lastly, they are just as beautiful as any other conventional ornamental garden plant.

AN ECOSYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

While we always tout the aesthetic and ornamental qualities of native plant gardens, they are first and foremost part of the larger ecosystem and should be treated that way. That means that leaves may get eaten or have eggs laid on them, dead stems may have to stick around for longer, and the urge to deadhead all spent flowers must be resisted! This does not mean that you will not still have a beautiful garden - but some traditional gardening techniques are simply not in line with an ecosystem perspective. To garden for wildlife means to relinquish some control over your garden for the greater good.



AFTERCARE BY SEASON

While native plant gardens are certainly "low-maintenance" they are not "no-maintenance." During the first two years they will require frequent watering to help them establish, mulching & weeding to prevent overcrowding, and pruning to manage blooms (if that is something that you care about). Follow these seasonal care instructions for the best results for your garden and for the wildlife that depends on it.

SPRING

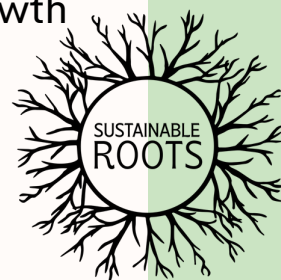
Watering: The name of the game here is quality over quantity - **water deeply** and less frequently to encourage deeper roots. Shallow, frequent watering can lead to shallow root systems and make plants more susceptible to drought stress.



- **Timing:** morning or later in the evening minimizes water loss. Avoid watering during the hottest part of the day to prevent stress on plants.
- **Checking Soil Moisture:** by inserting your finger into the soil. Water when the top inch or so of soil feels dry.
- **Rainfall Considerations:** adjust your watering schedule according to natural rainfall.
- **Watering Methods:** deliver water directly to the root zone, through drip irrigation or soaker hoses. Avoid overhead watering, which can wet foliage and increase the risk of fungal diseases.

Weeding: The earlier in the season that weeding becomes a routine the better. However, when plants are young they can be difficult to identify. Get to know local plants at all stages of growth and consider using a plant guide or app to help!

- **Method:** Ensure you remove the entire root to prevent regrowth. A good quality trowel goes a long way.



Weeding cont.:

- **Prevent Seed Formation:** Remove weeds before they flower and set seed. This helps prevent future weed problems.
- **Soil Health:** After weeding, smooth over disturbed soil and water gently to settle the soil around desirable plants. Mulch if needed.

Cleaning Out: Conventional gardening rules will tell us that leaves and dead stalks should only be removed once the temperature has been consistently over 10°C. However, this could still impact certain nesting insects that have different requirements. Instead, leave the leaves in your garden as additional mulch, and only trim back dead stalks if absolutely necessary, leaving about 1ft standing

Dividing & Transplanting: Spring is a good time to divide and transplant perennial plants that have become overcrowded. This promotes healthier growth and better flowering.

Chelsea Chop: involves pruning certain plants around late May to early June. Cutting back some of the growth of perennial plants can delay flowering and encourage bushier growth. This is very beneficial for plants that tend to get leggy or floppy. It can also extend the flowering period of plants, providing nectar and pollen for pollinators over a longer season.

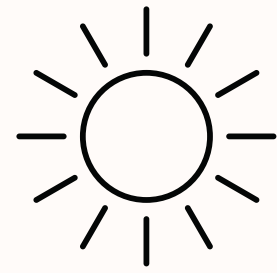
Technique:

- Identify stems or branches that you want to prune. Typically, you'll cut back about a third to a half of the plant's height.
- Use clean, sharp pruning shears to make clean cuts just above a leaf node or pair of leaves.

Species that tend to be suitable include: *Achillea*, *Monarda*, *Symphotrichum*, *Solidago*, *Echinacea*, *Rudbeckia*, *Eutrochium*, *Lobelia*



SUMMER



Watering: Continue to monitor rainfall levels and water more frequently during times of drought.

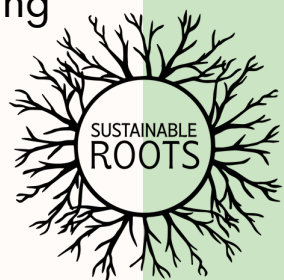
Weeding: Continue weeding and ensure that intruders are pulled out or cut back before going to seed.

Support Structures: Any plants that are getting a bit leggy and missed the spring Chelsea Chop may need some extra support. Tomato cages, stakes, and twine are easy and accessible tools to help keep these plants from flopping.

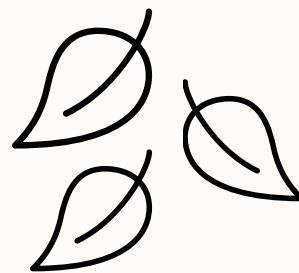
Spent Blooms: Avoid deadheading in order to provide a food source for local birds and a more robust local seed bank. If you are trying to manage the spread of particularly abundant species in your garden, consider collecting seeds and gifting them to a friend or neighbour OR bringing them to a local seed exchange!

Water Sources: As a bonus for the wildlife that is likely visiting your garden now, we encourage you to provide things like bird and bee baths so that thirsty critters can have a drink! These look like shallow dishes filled with rocks and water. Remember to change water regularly to prevent mosquito breeding.

Observe: Now is the time that we may be able to see some gaps to fill. We consider our gardens to be an ongoing conversation – if some plants aren't doing well in their new home, or we're missing blooms or colours during a certain time of the season, we would love to take notes during this season and make adjustments during the next planting season.



AUTUMN



Watering: Continue to monitor rainfall levels, begin to taper off of your summer watering schedule.

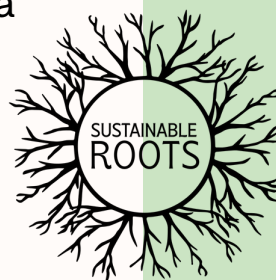
Weeding: Continue to be vigilant with weeds as they go to seed.

Leave The Leaves: No need to remove any organic waste from your garden! In fact, if you are raking leaves from your lawn, start to add those leaves to your garden as well for extra insulation during the winter.

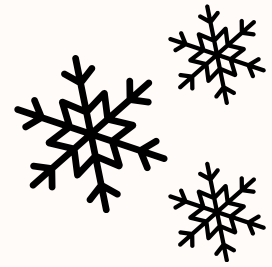
Don't Cut Back!: Leave spent seed heads standing to provide food and habitat for birds and insects over the next few seasons. These standing stalks can also add artful texture to your garden throughout the winter.

Planting & Transplanting: Fall is our favourite time to add new plants to the garden. The cooler temperatures are less stressful on plants, and by the time the spring comes around they are established and ready to do their thing! So if you noticed some gaps in your garden throughout the season, now is the time to fill them. This is also a great time to move around any plants that need dividing or would be happier in a new home.

Expand your garden: If you're looking to replace more of your lawn with garden, now is a great time to lay down cardboard to smother your grass. Ensure that you have no plastic or tape on your cardboard, lay it over the desired area, soak it, add soil to weigh it down and mulch to reduce erosion. Come spring, you will have a ready-to-plant garden!



WINTER

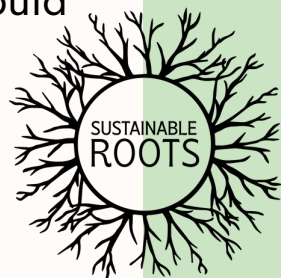


Watering: Water plants thoroughly before the first hard freeze but **not after**.

Pruning: Late winter/early spring is the best time to do any necessary pruning on trees and shrubs.

Planning: While simply creating pollinator habitat can be enough, there are so many ways that you can enhance your pollinator garden experience as well. Here are some idea for things that could be added to your garden that could be planned for over the winter:

- **Rain Barrel:** To help conserve water, reduce runoff, and guarantee a water source for your garden during drought. RainBarrel.ca is a non-profit that is a great source for affordable rain barrels in most areas.
- **Bird Feeders:** While the seeds in your garden can be a sufficient source of food for local birds, having supplemental feeders is always helpful AND a great way to bird watch! Wild Birds Unlimited has a wide selection of good quality feeders, food, nesting boxes, and water sources. www.wbu.com
- **Water Features:** Depending on where you live, you may have a natural water source nearby. But if you don't, having sources of water in your garden can be very beneficial to wildlife visitors. Commercial or homemade bird and bee baths can be a beautiful addition to the garden.
- **Shelter Structures:** Bird houses, Bat Boxes, and Bee Hotels are all available commercially, but simple brush piles, stumps, and rock piles can be a source of shelter for wildlife.
- **Certification:** If you have any of these extra features, you should consider getting certification from Canadian Wildlife Federation! They have beautiful signage that can add an educational component to you garden. www.cwf-fcf.org



RESOURCES

Canadian Wildlife Federation <https://cwfcfc.org/en/explore/gardening-for-wildlife/how/>

https://cwfcfc.org/en/resources/downloads/booklets-handouts/gardening_guide_en.pdf

In Our Nature <https://www.inournature.ca/spring-cleanup-done-right>

Landscape For Life

<https://landscapeforlife.colostate.edu/gardening-for-wildlife/>

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

https://trca.ca/app/uploads/2016/04/PollinatorMaintenanceGuide_WEB.pdf

Troy-Bilt <https://www.troybilt.ca/en/knowledge-tb-pollinator-garden-maintenance-year-round-guide/knowledge-tb-Pollinator-Garden-Maintenance-Year-Round-Guide.html>

