04 / NATIVE PLANT REFERENCE

Choose for the place you have

Native plants can provide food and cover. A Washington-area study linked nonnative-dominated yards with poorer food resources and population outcomes for Carolina chickadees. It does not predict the outcome of one planting. [6]

These six eastern native species are starting points. Confirm local range, mature width, soil and light before buying. A hardiness zone alone does not establish that a plant is locally native. [8-14]

Plant	Site and size	Value and watch-outs
American elderberry Sambucus canadensis [9]	Sun to part shade; prefers moist soil. About 5-12 ft tall.	Late-summer/fall fruit and branching cover. Spreads by suckers; allow room.
Black chokeberry Aronia melanocarpa [10]	Sun to part shade; tolerates varied moisture. About 3-10 ft tall.	Fruit for birds. Can form a spreading patch; check cultivar size.
Winterberry holly Ilex verticillata [11]	Sun to part shade; moist, acidic soil. About 3-15 ft tall.	Fall/winter fruit. Female plants need a compatible male with overlapping bloom.
Eastern red columbine Aquilegia canadensis [12]	Part shade; moist, well-drained soil. Up to about 3 ft tall.	Spring nectar for hummingbirds; self-seeds. A future-season planting, not an October flower promise.
Rough goldenrod Solidago rugosa [13]	Sun to light shade; moist soil. Allow room for spreading.	Late-season flowers support insects; songbirds eat the seeds. Leave suitable seed heads standing.
Black-eyed Susan Rudbeckia hirta [14]	Sun to part shade; well-drained soil. About 2-4 ft tall.	Goldfinches use fall seeds. Often short-lived and self-seeding; retain some seed heads.

Approximate species heights vary with site and cultivar. Plant names are linked through references 9-14. This is a habitat guide, not a plant-foraging or edibility guide.

Ask the nursery

“Is this exact species native in my county, and will it fit this light, moisture and mature space?” For a container, also check root room, winter exposure and watering needs.

08 / PRINTABLE OBSERVATION LOG

Describe it before you name it

Print another copy whenever you need one. Record what you see or hear, then separate your identification from your observations.

Date and start time

Place or window view and minutes watched

Weather and light conditions

Bird name or description and number seen at once

Identification confidence: ☐ Certain ☐ Tentative ☐ Unknown

What I saw or heard and what the bird was doing

Sketch or identifying details

One question for next time

Personal field notes, not a standardized survey. If you submit observations to eBird or FeederWatch, follow that program’s current counting and checklist instructions.