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Native Plant Designs



We were awarded "Best Of Houzz" once again for 2016 for Customer Satisfaction by Houzz, the leading platform for home remodeling and design. Our 9 year old landscape design firm was chosen by the more than 25 million monthly unique users that comprise the Houzz community from among more than 500,000 active home building, remodeling and design industry professionals.

We want to thank all of our wonderful clients who have given us the privilege of working on their properties.

Jay Petrow



Jay's creative vision, coupled with his horticultural knowledge, produces extraordinary landscapes for his clients.

To reach Jay with your landscaping questions, please call 203-803-0533 or [email](#)



The Garden in April

Greetings!

In an upcoming event, I will be discussing effective ways to incorporate native plants into local landscapes. I will focus on designs that will improve the aesthetics of your property while also benefiting the ecology and biodiversity of our region.

The presentation will be given **Thursday, April 14th at 7 pm at Earthplace, Westport's nature center, located at 10 Woodside Lane Westport, CT.** Read on to learn more about contemporary landscape designs using native plants ...

Using Native Plants in Your Landscape Design



Monarch butterfly on native swamp milkweed

Many experts in the ecological and environmental communities today are big proponents of using native plants in residential and public landscapes. There are many important benefits including feeding native insect and bird life, providing nectar to butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds, and creating safe nesting habitats for local and migrating birds, as well as small mammals. Native plants are also good for the environment because they don't need the extensive watering and fertilization that our lawns and many non native plants need.



PetrowGardens [design](#) using native inkberry and high bush cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*) in a designed landscape



Dutch designer Piet Oudolf used sweeps of native perennials and grasses to create extraordinary gardens

Using native plants has been a trend in landscape design for decades now. In the 1990's, [Piet Oudolf](#), the father of the 'Dutch Wave' of landscape design and responsible for the planting design of [The High Line in New York](#), began using many North American native plants in stylized or abstracted versions of native communities as design elements. The opening of the High Line in 2004, one of the most visited sites in NYC, further cemented the idea that native plants can be utilized for dramatic visual effects while also benefiting the surrounding environment.

In natural settings, plants grow together in complex communities, covering the ground with grasses and other groundcover that helps to keep down invasive weeds. The diversity of species occurring naturally, although great for biodiversity and animal life, can appear messy and unkempt. At the other extreme is the common homeowner landscape that has a few exotic plants floating in a bed of mulch surrounded by extensive lawns. There is not much there for wildlife to eat or nest in. But somehow this typical suburban landscape has endured in our culture.

[Thomas Rainer and Claudia West](#) delve into designing plant communities in depth with a new book, [Planting in a Post-Wild World](#). "Ultimately, the burden rests on the designer to translate ecological function into an aesthetic form."

And there are methods that many of today's landscape designers are using to create gardens that are abstracted versions of nature and yet hold together as designs. Legibility, order, repetition of shapes and colors are important in all landscape design including those that use mostly native plants.



Mixing formal elements with wild areas gives the impression that everything is under control

One technique used today is framing 'wild' areas of natives with clipped hedges, walls, fences or lawns. These self-contained areas of biodiversity are kept neat by the borders making the resulting gardens more palatable to those looking for order in their yards. Mixing formal, graphic elements like sheared boxwood with meadow grasses and perennials gives the impression that everything is under control.



Stylized, patterned plantings create coherence and legibility in the landscape

Another method is to create stylized, patterned plantings of large masses of one type of plant, contrasted against highly random mixes of species. The ordered geometry of these plantings creates the coherence necessary to make it understandable and attractive. [Wolfgang Oehme and James van Sweden](#), a design team known for their extensive use of native perennials note, "the repetition of structural plants creates a sense of visual unity."

Creating distinct layers of plants is another way to offer legibility in the garden that is calming to experience. Individual taller shrubs or trees can be surrounded with a low, highly diverse groundcover that highlights the taller element while not obstructing views. When all plants are equally high at eye level one gets the sense of being lost in the thickets and a sense of claustrophobia may ensue. Low plantings with occasional higher layers create lines of sight through to other areas giving people a way to navigate through the garden.




This PetrowGardens [meadow design](#) is a great way to attract pollinators and improve the aesthetics of your property

Setting aside even a small part of your lawn and planting a native garden will benefit the ecology of our region. With so many spectacular native plants, why wait? And if you need help designing your new garden, please get in touch with us. We're happy to help you.

Sincerely,

PetrowGardens Landscape Design
203 803-0533
[Email Jay](#)

Please forward this newsletter to others who would appreciate it - thanks!

 [Forward to a Friend](#)

PetrowGardens Landscape Design creates unique landscape solutions by integrating classic design principles of repetition of shapes, harmonization of colors, and use of contrasting textures and forms with artistic expression. The resulting gardens promise to be inviting to explore and stimulating to your senses. Native and non-native plants that provide seasonal interest for both you and the wildlife in our region are used in our designs.