Natives for the Kansas City Region

The following are 10 common species of plants, flowers and trees that grow well in the weather conditions of our region. The plants below are attractive and garden-worthy native plants that are recognized by Powell Gardens as Plants of Merit.

**Blue Star**
*Amsinckia intermedia*

Star-shaped, powdery-blue flowers that bloom in clusters in spring atop gracefully arching branches. Year-round ornamental features include spirea-like foliage. Best form in formal garden areas may be achieved by cutting back stems each year to 12 inches in late winter. If cut back, this shrub will grow to 3–5 feet tall in a single season. Perhaps best naturalized in native plant or woodland gardens.

**Blue False Indigo**
*Rhapis excelsa*

Dire stalks of blue, lace-like flowers cover this native perennial in spring. Fragrant, yellow flowers bloom along the branches in early spring before the foliage emerges. Female plants produce bright red berries in autumn. Light-green leaves turn yellow in autumn. Leaves are spicily aromatic when crushed.

**Smooth Hydrangea**
*Hydrangea arborescens*

Flattened clusters of dull white flowers appear in early summer on this native shrub. Prompt removal of spent flower heads may promote a late summer rebloom. Oval, serrate, dark green leaves are attractive through the growing season. Best form in formal garden areas may be achieved by cutting back stems each year to 12 inches in late winter. If cut back, this shrub will grow to 3–5 feet tall in a single season. Perhaps best naturalized in native plant or woodland gardens.

**Spicebush**
*Lindera benzoin*

This tough, thicket-forming native deciduous shrub grows 5–8 feet tall with erect, elongated 3-lobed lance-shaped leaves. Clumps typically grow to 12 inches tall from July to September. Good for open shady border areas, wildflower gardens, shade/woodland gardens or stream/pond margins. Flowers are attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds.

**Cardinal Flower**
*Lobelia cardinalis*

Good for shrub borders, open woodland areas and naturalized areas.

**Ninebark**
*Physocarpus opulifolius*

A tough, broad, rounded native shrub that grows 6–12 feet tall. This is an attractive selection for shrub borders, open woodland gardens or along stream/pond edges. Fragrant, yellow flowers bloom along the branches in early spring before the foliage emerges. Female plants produce bright red berries in autumn. Light green leaves turn yellow in autumn. Leaves are spicily aromatic when crushed.

**Fringetree**
*Chionanthus virginicus*

This native fringe tree is named for its outstanding airy clusters of slightly fragrant pink to white flowers with fringe-like, drooping, creamy white petals. Flower petals flutter gracefully in just a hint of breeze. It typically grows as a large shrub or small tree to 12–20 feet tall. Birds delight in the grape-like fruit which matures in late summer. Gracefully arching branches. Year-round ornamental features include spirea-like clusters of pinkish to white flowers in spring; lobed dark green leaves in summer and in fall; and clusters of reddish-brown fruits that mature in autumn. The exfoliating reddish-brown bark, for which this plant is named, is best observed after leaf drop and throughout winter. Good for shrub borders, open woodland areas and naturalized areas.

**Sourgrass**
*Nyssa sylvatica*

Although native to lowlands, this stately tree does exceedingly well as a residential landscape shade tree. It matures to 30–50 feet tall with a straight deeply textured trunk and rounded crown. Handsome dark green summer foliage gives way to spectacular orange-scarlet-purple fall color. Female trees produce black-blue oval fruits that are quite attractive to birds and wildlife. Performs well in moist low spots.

**Amsonia tabernaemontana**

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Each of these plant species should be readily available at your local lawn and garden store or nursery. For more information about native landscaping in the Kansas City region, please visit www.marc.org/Environment/Water.