

## ***Natives at Our Nurseries***

Increasingly, garden nurseries are branching out into native plants, including some of our rare orchids, lady's slippers, and our protected provincial flowers. No matter what your choice, it is important to be well informed before you buy.

### **Plant Sources**

Proper conservation practices and propagation methods of native plants for nursery (or garden centre) stock will ensure that we do not cause unintentional harm nor lose our investment.

As native plants become more and more accepted in mainstream gardening circles, the potential for the plant species to be endangered by improper sourcing practices by vendors also increases. Ask your garden nursery about the origin of any native plant you wish to purchase.

- The preferred sources are seeds or cuttings (propagation from seeds is a better method).
- Transplantations from natural habitat are harmful and illegal. The plants are crucial to their native habitats, so harvesting them might deplete the habitat of the population and consequently create an imbalance that will have a pervasive negative impact on the area.

Also, the natural habitat of native plants is quite intricate, so transplanted plants might not survive removal from their environment to a garden. Plants that are propagated for nursery stock have a better chance of survival because they were developed and are maintained in artificial or less finely-tuned circumstances.

### **Check Plant Hardiness Before You Buy**

Check the labels of the native plants that you are considering in order to ensure that you will be planting them in their proper habitat. Ask the staff at the nursery about each plant's hardiness-zone rating, as well as the rating of the zone in your area. You will want primarily plants that are rated for your area, but you may also consider some borderline-hardy plants, which can be successfully grown with a little experimentation and if the immediate conditions of its planting-site tend toward the conditions of the neighbouring zone. If the plants the nursery stocks are shipped in from elsewhere -- and this is more-than-likely the case for stores that temporarily sell plants in the spring -- you should not assume that the plants will be hardy for your area.

## **Check Plant Hardiness Before You Buy** (continued)

Even better is to purchase plants that suit your ecoregion. Terrestrial ecoregions are determined by regional characteristics of precipitation, temperature, latitude, geology and geography. Plants growing in their distinct habitat will require less maintenance and will flourish without much intervention. Do your homework or consult a landscape professional before you buy your growing investment!

## **Guarantees and Warranties**

When you are buying your plants, ask if there are warranties or guarantees on the plants. Most nurseries offer a minimum one-year guarantee from the date of purchase on perennials, shrubs and trees. Make sure it is a no-hassle guarantee that does not depend on how the plant was planted or taken care of. This ensures that no matter if you are a first-time gardener or an expert, the plant will be replaced if it does not survive its first winter. You should, however, expect at least one casualty out of a complete yard planting.

The nursery may not provide a guarantee if the plants are borderline-hardy to your area. Also, plants sold in end-of-season sales might offer big savings, but at the risk of having no guarantee. Weigh the odds versus the price reduction. If half of the plants you purchase die, will you be willing to pay full price for their replacements the following year?