1. Replacement Method

It can be as simple as replacing a dying or dead tree, shrub or perennial with a native plant in your existing garden beds. The term “native”, however, has different meanings. It could be native to North America, native to the USA, or native east of the Mississippi, but we suggest you select native plants found in your specific region.

The National Wildlife Federation has a database to search by zip code to find native plants that host the highest numbers of butterflies and moths to feed birds and other wildlife where you live. [https://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/Plants](https://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/Plants). The National Audubon Society also has an extensive database to search by zip code of native plants found in your area, as well as what bird species you might attract as well. There is information about native plant sellers and plant sales at Audubon Centers located near you. [https://www.audubon.org/native-plants](https://www.audubon.org/native-plants)

2. Starting a New Garden Bed

- **Start Small!** Do not “bite off more than you can chew” as new gardens NEED MAINTENANCE!
- **Analyze your site.** It is essential to know the amount of sun and moisture your site receives so that you can select the right plant for the right place. Also, knowledge of your soil is important. You might not have native soil. It was probably carted off by your builder.
- **Remove existing vegetation.** If it is grass, there is no need to remove the sod. Simply smother it by using bags of unopened mulch, piles of leaves or newspapers and cardboard. This method may take several months so plan ahead.
- **Using seeds:** This method is only for the most stalwart native plant aficionado. Some seeds of native plants are double dormant and need two seasons to germinate. Other seeds may not produce blooming plants for two or three years, and you will need to be able to differentiate the baby plants from the weeds that will grow. DO NOT USE “MEADOW IN A CAN” or other commercially promoted seed mixtures. These can harbor non-native invasive species. Buy only from reputable sources.
- **Using potted plants.** There are now numerous sources of an assortment of sizes of potted native plants. Each year, the Midwest Native Plant Conference holds a Native Plant & Artisan Sale open to the public at no charge on Saturday during their conference. Most of the vendors sell native potted plants of various sizes and includes trees and shrubs. Conference vendors are listed on the website under “Annual Conference”. 
