

grow me instead



BCLNA



N. Bakker



GROW ME INSTEAD
(Ornamental)



R. Mueller



AVOID USE
(Invasive)

Dame's Rocket
Hesperis matronalis

Garden Phlox
Phlox paniculata

Grow Me Instead profiles are recommended alternatives to Alberta's most unwanted horticultural plants

Why remove invasive plants from your garden?

Often plants are brought to Alberta from other parts of the world. They are used for gardening, food, or medicine, and have spread beyond garden fences and into our natural areas. When this happens, they can become invasive, crowding out native species, damaging wildlife habitat, and reducing Alberta's unique biodiversity. Some invasive species pose serious risks to human health, agriculture, forestry, and animals.

Invasive species often thrive in new environments because they are hardy, reproduce quickly, and have few natural predators which allows them to spread rapidly. Invasive plants often spread through human activities such as gardening, landscaping, and moving soil or plant material. Choosing non-invasive alternatives for your garden helps prevent the spread of invasive plants and protects Alberta's natural landscapes and economy.

Alberta's Weed Control Act

The invasive plants featured in this brochure were introduced to Alberta either accidentally in contaminated seed or soil, or intentionally as ornamental garden plants. While many are no longer sold commercially, they may still be found in gardens, small seed packages, and shared through various informal plant exchanges. Under the *Alberta Weed Control Act*, landowners or occupants are required to control Noxious weeds and destroy Prohibited Noxious weeds wherever they are found. These regulations help protect Alberta's agriculture, natural areas, and ecosystems from the impacts of invasive plants. More information on invasive species, can be found at abinvasives.ca.

What is Canada doing about invasive alien plants?










In Canada, organizations responding to invasive alien plants include federal, territorial, provincial, and municipal governments, universities, colleges, botanical gardens, herbaria (collections of dried plants), non-government environmental organizations, youth groups, businesses, and First Nations groups. Responses to invasive alien plants have included surveys, mapping, management programs, monitoring, and regulations. Preventive programs are widely recognized as the most effective and cost-efficient means of control for invasive alien plants.

Your Guide to PLANT WISE Gardening

- **Make good choices.** Purchase and grow non-invasive exotic or regional native plants. Do your research. Ask your local garden centre or ask a local horticulture expert. Check out abinvasives.ca and Alberta Native Plant Council anpc.ab.ca.
- **Replace existing invasive plants** in your garden with non-invasive plants.
- **Treat and remove** existing invasive plants using species-appropriate methods. **Check out AISC's factsheets for control methods BEFORE you start:** abinvasives.ca.
- **Properly dispose of invasive plants.** Remove invasive plants before they flower to prevent seed spread. Check with your local landfill for disposal programs or double-bag invasive species destined for the landfill. Never dispose of invasive plants in natural areas or parks. Never compost invasive plants!
- **Trade only plants and seeds you know are non-invasive.**
- **Avoid collecting pretty "wildflowers"** from roadsides or natural areas. Many are overly aggressive invasive plants. Allow true native plants to thrive in their natural setting.
- **Avoid pre-packaged wildflower mixes** unless the contents are identified and contain only non-invasive species.
- **Encourage others** to plant non-invasive plants and to replace existing invasive plants.
- **Mulch and/or use ground covers** in open garden areas to prevent invasive plants from establishing.
- **Report** invasive plants on EDDMapS using your computer or smartphone. Go to eddmaps.org to join for free!

This guide shows you what plants to avoid and examples of good, non-invasive alternatives to consider for your Alberta garden. Choose the right plant for the right place.

LEGEND

	PLANT SPECIES NATIVE TO ALBERTA		DROUGHT TOLERANT
	FULL SUN		LOW WATER
	PARTIAL SHADE		MODERATE WATER
	FULL SHADE		REGULAR WATER
			HIGH WATER

This booklet references the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Cold Hardiness Zone System and reflects the local knowledge and experience of the Alberta nursery industry.

Nomenclature from VASCAN, the [Database of Vascular Plants of Canada](#) and ACIMS, the [Alberta Conservation Information Management System](#)



INVASIVE – AVOID USE

Common Baby's Breath

Gypsophila paniculata

Ornamental perennial used in floral arrangements. In winter, stems break off, blowing around in the wind, like tumbleweeds, spreading seed to pastures and natural areas. Infestations are widespread across Canada and northern United States.



INSTEAD TRY

Northern Bedstraw

Galium boreale

Sweet-smelling clusters of small white flowers bloom July-August. Bright green leaves on slender stems. Good for use in fresh or dried flower arrangements. This low-maintenance, adaptable plant makes for good ground cover in gardens. Attractive to pollinators. Zone 3



Ht. 20-60 cm; W. spreading

Common Yarrow

Achillea millefolium

Herbaceous perennial with broad, flattened heads of flowers and feathery leaves. Commercial varieties with varying flower colours are also available. Zone 3



Ht. 60-90 cm; W. 60-90 cm



Russian Sage

Salvia yangii

Upright bush. Fragrant, grey-green foliage. Lavender blue blossoms. Flowers July to October. Good for cut flowers/dry arrangements. Attracts butterflies. Zone 4



Ht. 80-100 cm; W. 60-90 cm

ALSO CONSIDER: Meadow rue varieties (*Thalictrum delavayi*) Zone 3; Narrow-leaved meadowsweet  (*Spiraea alba* DuRoi var. *alba*) Zone 3; Pearly everlasting  (*Anaphalis margaritacea*) Zone 3

Bighead Knapweed

Centaurea macrocephala

Long-lived perennial which outcompetes native vegetation. Reproduces by seed. Yellow florets on a large flower base or "big head". Difficult to remove once established. Brought in as a garden ornamental.



INSTEAD TRY

Black-eyed Susan

Rudbeckia hirta

Bright-yellow, 5-8 cm wide, daisy-like flowers with dark centers occur singly atop each stem. It is covered with hairs that give it a slightly rough texture. Blooms late summer and into the fall. A great selection for large or small landscapes. Annual to short-lived perennial. Zone 3



Ht. 30-90 cm; W. 30-45 cm

Globeflower

Trollius chinensis

An extremely popular perennial that bursts into colour in late spring and early summer and has contrasting deep green leaves. Easy care, it grows well in a sunny or part-shaded border, also at the edge of moist woodland. Flowers will last a few days when cut. Zone 3



Ht. 75-90 cm; W. 45-60 cm

Prairie Coneflower

Ratibida columnifera

This perennial coneflower is a valuable addition to any dry, sunny border being drought tolerant and suitable for xeriscaping. The flowers resemble small hats, with yellow reflexed ray petals and large greenish-brown columnar centers. Attracts bees, butterflies and birds. Flowers are good for cutting. Zone 3



Ht. 60-90 cm; W.40-50 cm

ALSO CONSIDER: Hardy lily species (*Lillium dauricum* (*L. pensylvanicum*)) Zone 3; Lemon daylily (*Hemerocallis flava* (*H. lilioasphodelu*)) Zone 3

Himalayan Balsam

Impatiens glandulifera

Fast growing annual. Can reach an impressive size, rapidly out-competing other plants, especially in riparian areas and along shorelines. Orchid shaped flower resembling a British policeman's helmet. Mature, brittle seed capsules explode upon contact, catapulting seeds 6 metres or more. Shallow root system makes it easily controlled by hand-pulling.

PROHIBITED
NOXIOUS



D. Hanna

INSTEAD TRY

Smooth Blue Beardtongue

Penstemon nitidus

Incredibly blue, tubular flowers rise above thick, pale green/grey leaves. Flowers late May to early July depending on elevation. Excellent for rock gardens. Best in gravelly, well drained soil. Attract butterflies and hummingbirds. Zone 2



T. Tannery

Ht. 20-30 cm; W. 20-40 cm

Gas Plant

Dictamnus albus var. *purpureus*

Long-lived, unique perennial. Lemon scented, glossy green leaves. Bushy, upright clumps. Spikes of spidery-looking mauve-pink flowers. Flowers early summer. Worthwhile for cutting. Attracts butterflies. Zone 2



W. Klooster

Ht. 60-90 cm; W. 45-60 cm

Cardinal Flower

Lobelia cardinalis

An eastern North American native herbaceous perennial that grows well in wet or even boggy soils. Flowers are brilliant vermilion red, produced through summer into fall on flowering stalks a metre in height. Cultivars with green or bronze-purple leaves and white or pink flowers are available. Zone 2



C. Lewis

Ht. 60-120 cm; W. 30-60 cm

ALSO CONSIDER: Blue Boy garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata* 'Blue Boy') Zone 3; Blue columbine (Aquilegia *brevistyla*) Zone 3; Candle larkspur (*Delphinium elatum*) Zone 2; Pink turtle (*Chelone lyonii*, *C. obliqua*) Zone 3

Creeping Bellflower

Campanula rapunculoides

Bell-shaped, nodding blue flowers on leafy stalks. Reproduces by seeds, slender creeping rhizomes, and tuberous root pieces. Rhizomes can spread under fences and concrete. Produces up to 15,000 seeds per plant. Can displace and dominate lawns and perennial sun or shade gardens. Survives periods of drought and resistant to some herbicides. Extremely difficult to eradicate.

UNREGULATED



D. Hanna

INSTEAD TRY

Carpathian Harebell

Campanula carpatica

Perennial mounds of blue, cup-like flowers, 2.5 cm across, atop a compact rounded clump of dark green leaves. Blooms June to September. Excellent for borders and edging. Zone 3



J. Opatris

Ht. 15-30 cm; W. 15-30 cm

Smooth Blue Beardtongue

Penstemon nitidus

Incredibly blue, tubular flowers rise above thick, pale green/grey leaves. Flowers late May to early July depending on elevation. Excellent for rock gardens. Best in gravelly, well drained soil. Attract butterflies and hummingbirds. Zone 2



T. Tannery

Ht. 20-30 cm; W. 20-40 cm

Tall Lungwort

Mertensia paniculata

Native across most of North America; common in the boreal forest in central and northern Alberta. Large plant and should be given room to spread out. Combine with other shade-loving native plants to create a naturalized area in the garden. Zone 3



J. Ruter

Ht. 10-70 cm; W. spreading

ALSO CONSIDER: Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) Zone 3; Larkspur/delphinium (*Delphinium* spp. ornamental varieties) Zone 3; Silvery perennial lupine (*Lupinus argenteus*) Zone 3



INVASIVE – AVOID USE

Dame's Rocket

Hesperis matronalis

Often confused with garden phlox. Dame's rocket has 4 petals and alternate leaves, phlox has 5 petals and opposite leaves. Flower colour can be magenta through to pink or white. Considered a "traditional" garden flower. Prolific seed producer often found in "wildflower" mixes. Especially problematic near woodlands.

NOXIOUS



R. Mueller

INSTEAD TRY

Garden Phlox

Phlox paniculata

Native to eastern and central United States and eastern Canada, it is a summer garden favourite due to the clouds of billowy blooms, long flowering season, and easy care. The five-petaled flowers are packed into dense clusters. Many cultivars available in a range of flower colours, sizes and fragrances. Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies. Zone 3



Dow Gardens

Ht. 30-120 cm; W. 50-70 cm

Spotted Joe-Pye Weed

Eutrochium maculatum var. *maculatum*

Native to Canada, this attractive plant produces pale pink-purple flowers atop red stems that last mid-summer through fall. A must have for wildflower lovers, it attracts a multitude of butterflies with its sweet nectar. Zone 3



B. Rushbrooke

Ht. 60-160 cm; W. 60-90 cm

Giant Hyssop

Agastache foeniculum

Plant this species as an ornamental or in the herb garden. Short-lived perennial that reseeds and grows in a clumping habit. Small blue-purple flowers in fuzzy spikes bloom all summer and into fall. Flowers are edible and can be crumbled into salads or made into tea. Mint and licorice scented foliage. Attracts bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Zone 4



Ht. 100-150 cm; W. 30 cm

ALSO CONSIDER: Autumn Joy sedum (*Sedum* x 'Autumn Joy') Zone 2; Blue false indigo (*Baptisia australis*) Zone 3, Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) Zone 3

Yellow Clematis

Clematis tangutica

Spreading vine plant. Yellow, pendant flowers. Seeds have silky, long tufts easily carried on wind and water. Aggressive plant once established. Urban and natural area infestations are becoming more common, displacing native flora and increasing fire hazard. This species is also moving into mountain parks.



INSTEAD TRY

Honeybelle Honeysuckle

Lonicera x brownii

Deep golden coloured flowers. Compact twining vine. Clean, round medium-green foliage. Blossoms throughout the season. Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies. Zone 4



Ht. 3-6 m; W. 3-6 m

Dropmore Scarlet Honeysuckle

Lonicera x brownii 'dropmore scarlet'

Fast-growing twining vine with waxy green leaves and showy orange to scarlet trumpet-shaped flowers. Blooms throughout the summer. Prefers full sun but will grow and flower with partial shade. Developed in Manitoba for Canadian prairie conditions. Zone 3



Ht. 3-4 m

Western White Clematis

Clematis ligusticifolia

Lovely white flowers with yellow centres. Blooms June/July. Decorative "Old Man's Beard" seed head. Twining climber that does not die back to the ground over winter. Zone 3



Ht. 4-9 m; W. 0.5-1 m

ALSO CONSIDER: Common hop (*Humulus*) Zone 3; Persian yellow rose (*Rosa foetida persiana*) Zone 4; Hardy grapes, Zone 3

Ox-Eye Daisy

Leucanthemum vulgare

A classic, white daisy. Lower leaves are toothed and upper leaves have wavy margins. Reproduces by seed, or by shallow rhizomes (creeping roots). Single plants quickly become large patches. Unpalatable for grazing by livestock or wildlife. Has become a serious invasive problem in natural areas. Cultivars produce seeds that can revert to ox-eye daisy. (Caution: Often found in wildflower mixes)

NOXIOUS



INSTEAD TRY

Alpine Aster

Aster alpinus

Branching stems, single daisy-shaped, clear white, yellow-eyed flowers on low clumps of bright green leaves. Blooms in late spring/early summer. Grow in rock gardens or used for edging. Self-seeds to produce successive generations. Zone 3



Ht. 20-30 cm; W. spreading

White Swan Coneflower

Echinacea purpurea 'White Swan'

A white-flowered variety of the common purple coneflower. The 8 cm diameter flowers have white rays and coppery conical centers on long stems making them ideal cut flowers. Blooms profusely all summer long and is perfect for beds, borders, and naturalized areas. Drought, deer, heat, humidity, and poor soil tolerant. Zone 3



Ht. 60-90 cm; W. 45-60 cm

Tufted Fleabane

Erigeron caespitosus

A single plant will produce numerous white or light pink daisy-like flowers in groups of 1-4 at the ends of upper branches. Foliage and stems are covered with stiff hairs. Drought and heat tolerant. Great for rock gardens and dry sunny garden beds. Zone 3



Ht. 8-30 cm; W. 12-40 cm

ALSO CONSIDER: Biokovo Cranesbill geranium (2015 Perennial Plant of the Year, *Geranium* × *cantabrigiense* 'Biokovo') Zone 3; Showy fleabane (*Erigeron speciosus*) Zone 2; Lance-leaved tickseed (*Coreopsis lanceolata*) Zone 3

Purple Loosestrife

Lythrum salicaria

Referred to as “the beautiful killer”. Tall, strong purple spires. Takes over ponds, beaches, marshes, farm dugouts, and irrigation canals. A mature plant can produce 2.5 million seeds. Ornamental *Lythrum* cultivars, originally considered sterile, have proven fertile when cross pollinated, including ‘Morden’ varieties developed by Agriculture Canada. Still present in Alberta despite previous eradication efforts.

PROHIBITED
NOXIOUS



INSTEAD TRY

Tall Larkspur

Delphinium glaucum

Rising from a woody rootstock, this stout, tall perennial has deeply cut leaves, and both stem and leaves have a greyish, waxy covering. Spikes of deep blue to purple flowers up to 30 cm tall. Zone 3



Ht. 90-180 cm; W. 45-60 cm

Meadow Blazingstar

Liatris ligulistylis

Both *L. ligulistylis* and *L. punctata* are native to Alberta. Easy to grow in a range of soils and conditions but prefer dry, sandy or rocky, alkaline soils. Stems rise from basal tufts of narrow, lance-shaped leaves. Fluffy, deep rose-purple flower heads in columnar inflorescences form at tops of leafy stems. Good in a mixed garden planting or as a specimen plant. Extremely attractive to butterflies. Zone 3



Ht. 30-90 cm; W. 20-40 cm

Wood Betony

Stachys officinalis ‘Hummelo’

2019 Perennial Plant of the Year. Drought tolerant, deer and rabbit resistant, and bees, butterflies and other pollinators are attracted to the abundant nectar provided by the tiny orchid-like flowers that make up the bottlebrush spikes. Blooms beginning in mid-June make good cut-flowers. Great as an edging plant towards the front of the border. Keeps its compact shape without pruning. Zone 3



Ht. 30-60 cm; W. 30-60 cm

ALSO CONSIDER: Spike speedwell (*Veronica spicata*) Zone 3; Karl Foerster feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora* ‘Karl Foerster’) Zone 3; Wilson’s ligularia (*Ligularia wilsoniana*) Zone 2

Salt Cedar

Tamarix chinensis, *T. ramosissima*

Deciduous shrub/small tree that grows 3-4 m tall and is found along creeks, rivers, and ponds. Scale-like leaves concentrate salt from ground water in saline soil — makes it unsuitable for many native plants/shrubs. Deep rooted and consumes as much as 750 L of water per day. Can produce 600,000 seeds annually. Seeds easily dispersed by wind and water. Severed stems root readily.

PROHIBITED
NOXIOUS



INSTEAD TRY

Saskatoon Serviceberry

Amelanchier alnifolia

Why not make your garden edible as well as beautiful! Typically, an erect shrub, there are many wonderful varieties available varying in height, time of flowering and maturity of fruit. Flowers are fragrant, berries are sweet, and foliage turns orange and red in the fall. Zone 2



Ht. 1.5-4 m; W. 1.5-3 m

Queen of the Prairie

Filipendula rubra 'Venusta'

Selected from a North American wildflower, Queen of the Prairie is a bold accent plant. Coarsely divided green leaves. Forms mounds with large panicles of bright pink flowers. Sturdy upright stems. Zone 2



Ht. 120-180 cm; W. 60-90 cm

Lilacs

Syringa spp.

Lilacs have a beautiful, classic fragrance and local nurseries carry varieties for cold climates. Depending on the variety, flowers bloom in early spring to mid-summer. Adapted to many soil types/climate conditions. Available in low urban hedges, e.g. Dwarf Korean lilac (*S. meyeri* 'Palibin'), to large shrubs for screening, e.g. Donald Wyman lilac (*S. x prestoniae* 'Donald Wyman'), a non-suckering type. Zone 3



Ht. 1.5-4 m; W. 1.5-3 m

ALSO CONSIDER: Rocky Mountain juniper varieties (*Juniperus scopulorum*) Zone 3; Ninebark shrub varieties (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) Zone 2; Prickly wildrose (*Rosa acicularis*) Zone 2

Pre-packaged Wildflower Mixes

Many contain seeds of non-native, aggressive plant species legislated as invasive. Contents are rarely listed accurately by their scientific names. The wide variety of common names used for some plants adds to the confusion.

Never purchase a seed mix without the packet being clearly labeled with scientific names and be aware that some seed packets with contents labeled may still contain surprise invaders not listed.



INSTEAD TRY

Planting individual packets of your favourite wildflowers. It is far less work than battling unwanted invasive plants for years.

Making your own wildflower mix. Purchase packets of your favourite flowers, in the colours and sizes right for your garden, mix them and plant your own wildflower garden.

Considering local native plants. Research the native plant growers/suppliers in your area. Choose one of the most reputable local sources for seed to ensure species planted are native to, and adapted for, a specific area.

Caution: Regional mixes (those listed for certain general areas e.g. Prairie mixes) do not necessarily contain native seed.

See also: Alberta Native Plant Council's Guidelines for Purchase and Use of Wildflower Seed Mixes anpc.ab.ca

Not All Wildflowers Are Native to Alberta

Many plants sold as "wildflowers" may look beautiful, but they aren't always native—or beneficial—to Alberta's ecosystems. True native wildflowers evolved alongside local pollinators, birds, and wildlife, helping support healthy, diverse landscapes.

Some non-native species, even those in colourful "wildflower" mixes, can spread aggressively and become invasive. These plants can outcompete native species, reduce biodiversity, and alter natural habitats—sometimes without obvious warning.

Buyer Beware: Wildflower Seed Mixes

Pre-packaged "wildflower" mixes often prioritize appearance over ecological value. They may include non-native or invasive species and don't always clearly list scientific (Latin) names. Some mixes have even introduced problem species like ox-eye daisy and dame's rocket into natural areas.

Plant with Purpose

- Choose native or non-invasive plants suited to your region
- Avoid generic mixes without clearly listed species
- Buy from reputable, local suppliers

Learn to identify invasive plants and avoid spreading seeds.

By planting native species, you support pollinators, protect biodiversity, and help prevent the spread of invasive weeds.

For more information on native plant species and where to source them, visit the Alberta Native Plant Council website: anpc.ab.ca

“ALERT” SPECIES

The following species are not regulated invasive species in Alberta but are regulated in some neighbouring jurisdictions. They can be problematic in certain areas of our province. Purchase and/or plant these species with caution.

- Bachelor’s Buttons
(*Centaurea cyanus*)
- Bishop’s Goutweed
(*Aegopodium podagraria*)
- Cypress Spurge
(*Euphorbia cyparissias*)
- Mountain Star-thistle
(*Centaurea montana*)
- Lamium species
(*Lamium species*)
- Lily of the Valley
(*Convallaria majalis*)
- Scotch Broom
(*Cytisus scoparius*)
- Russian Olive
(*Elaeagnus angustifolia*)
- Caragana
(*Caragana arborescens*)

There are several aquatic invasive plants, fish and other species that are regulated in Alberta under the Alberta **Fisheries Act**. Look for information on aquatic species as well as these Alert Species at abinvasives.ca



abinvasives.ca | info@abinvasives.ca

Acknowledgements

This brochure was developed using information from the following publications:

- *Weed Wise Gardening and Grow Me Instead* (2020), Alberta Invasive Species Council
- *Grow Me Instead – Northern Version* (Invasive Species Council of British Columbia; Saskatchewan Invasive Species Council; Yukon Invasive Species Council; Ontario Invasive Plant Council)

Special thanks to the input from the following individuals and organizations:

Barb Evans, Golden Acre Garden Centre; Verne Williams, VMW Gardener/ Master Gardeners; Amy Needham, City of Grande Prairie; Qiting Chen, City of Edmonton; Catherine Falk, City of Edmonton; Jesse Streight, City of Red Deer; Keziah Lesko-Gosselin, City of Medicine Hat