

CRANBROOK  
HOUSE & GARDENS

*How to Farm a  
Native Plant  
Rescue Program*





## About Us

Cranbrook House, the oldest surviving English manor in metro-Detroit, was once the home of George Gough Booth, publisher of the *Detroit Evening News* (known today as *The Detroit News*), and Ellen Scripps Booth. Built in 1908, the Arts & Crafts-style home and stunning gardens are situated on 40 acres within the Cranbrook Educational Community - a National Historic Landmark campus created through the vision and philanthropic efforts of the Booths.

Today, Cranbrook House & Gardens is open for self-guided visits, tours and special events offered throughout the year by Cranbrook House & Gardens Auxiliary - a volunteer organization formed in 1971 with the purpose of preserving and restoring the historic estate.

### **Mission**

Cranbrook House & Gardens Auxiliary is a volunteer organization of about 300 members dedicated to preserving, restoring, and maintaining Cranbrook House & Gardens and related cultural properties for the enjoyment, education and cultural enrichment of our members, the Cranbrook community and the public. Volunteers annually log over 10,000 hours of service.

### **Native Plant/Wildflower Rescue Program**

Formed in 1975, the Cranbrook House & Gardens Auxiliary Native Plant/Wildflower Rescue program is committed to saving, growing, and educating on the importance of native plants.

### **Cranbrook House & Gardens**

380 Lone Pine Road  
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304  
[housegardens.cranbrook.edu](http://housegardens.cranbrook.edu)

*This document has been prepared for general information purposes only to permit you to learn more about forming a native plant rescue program. The information presented is not legal advice and is not to be acted on as such. Cranbrook is not liable to you or others, in any way or for any damages of any kind or under any theory, arising from this document.*



## **Goals**

Dig with an organized non-profit group that has specific goals. You may contribute plants to nature centers, local schools or to community based groups that are establishing a native plant/wildflower garden. If fundraising is your goal, remember that before you can sell rescued plants they must be certified free of disease by a State inspector.

## **Site Selection & Access**

- Read articles in the newspapers for future development of wooded sites.
- Network with state Departments of Natural Resources and Transportation.
- Wetland consultation firms and local land conservancies often are aware of what areas are slated for development.
- Be watchful for for sale signs or surveyors stakes that may appear on vacant property. Names of property owners may be obtained by contacting the local city or township office.
- Perhaps the most productive contacts are the major housing developers in your area. Establish a contact and follow through with that person on an annual basis. Many phone calls may be saved by going directly to the owner of the property who will have the authority to give you written permission to rescue plants from their site.

## **Information for Property Owner**

- Call the office of the property owner and ask to talk with someone regarding the property in question. State your mission and ask permission to dig on their property.
- Offer to send, by fax, additional information about your organization. It is beneficial to have stationery with a letterhead to establish your credibility.
- Liability is a major concern for most developers and is appropriate to discuss at this time. Cranbrook requires each volunteer to sign a liability waiver stating that the property owner is not responsible for any injuries that may occur while on their property.
- Cranbrook also has a standard form that the owner of the property signs giving permission to remove wildflowers from the parcel that is to be developed. This form also states that the owner

# Farming a Native Plant Rescue Program

**(Information for Property Owner continued)** is not liable for injuries incurred by volunteers. In addition to the liability issue it is also necessary for written permission because, in Michigan, wildflowers may be legally dug only with written permission from the property owner.

- Find out if there are wetlands or other restricted areas on the site that will be left in a natural site where plants should not be removed.

## **Advance Planning**

Have members on your team who are knowledgeable about native species and know what can be transplanted successfully. There are many reference books available that both identify and give cultural requirements for native plants. Plants on the rare and endangered species list need a special permit from the Department of Natural Resources.

- Within your organization, appoint an individual to be responsible for a dig. If you dig several days in a row, assign a day chairman to share the load. This person should carry the proper maps, directions and permission slips.
- Someone from your committee should have scouted the area and be able to identify the plants they find. If possible, tie a plastic bag in a tree to mark a significant find.
- Choose a location where the diggers will meet and decide how many cars are necessary to carpool to the dig site. People with more plant knowledge should be paired with less experienced diggers.

## **On Site**

If a neighbor or a stranger approaches the group the day chairman should show his or her identification badge and explain what you are doing. Most people are very supportive to know that you are rescuing plants for a good cause.

- Allow one hour of digging time at the site. Many plants can be dug in this period of time and they all need to be cared for later.
- Follow the buddy system. This is particularly important for new diggers. The experienced person

# *Farming a Native Plant Rescue Program*

**(Onsite continued)** can show how to dig a particular plant. It is very important to get all of the roots or rhizomes since many plants grow very deep. If the site is large it is highly recommended to be within eyesight of each other. You do not want to lose plants or diggers.

- Dress wisely by layering clothing. A long sleeved shirt with long gauntlet gloves to protect your wrist from poison ivy is a good idea. Waterproof boots or sturdy shoes are essential.
- We recommend a four foot shovel with a "D" handle, available at most hardware stores. Mark it with your name and tie a ribbon or bandana to the handle. On site, always "plant" your shovel when not in use. Do not lay it on the ground; it easily disappears into the forest floor.
- When digging put like plants together. Plant grouping is important when it comes to potting. It is more efficient to have all of one species together. Most plants fare better if put in a shallow box. Sturdy plastic bags work well for large ferns.
- For spring ephemerals, we have found that potting them in the woods is efficient and the plants transplant better. A trowel may be used to fill small pots.
- Leave the woods looking as undisturbed as possible. Do not leave any garbage, boxes or bags.
- Dig only what you can carry and what your vehicle can hold. When you have a full box of plants carry it to the car before filling another.
- At the end of an hour the day chairman will signal that it is time to pack up and leave.
- Water and lunch or a snack is good to have after returning to the holding area. A first aid kit should always be available.
- Pots, soil and a water source need to be available at the holding area. Each person is responsible for the plants that they dig. If unable to finish potting or planting your plants, make sure that someone will look after them for you.
- Wash your hands after returning from the wood to minimize the possibility of poison ivy. When potting we recommend the use of latex gloves.
- In addition to the gratification that comes with saving woodland wildflowers, remember that sharing a few plants with the members of your rescue team is always a happy bonus.

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*Good Luck!*

