

How to (Gently) Fight Plants with Plants

by [Nancy Lawson, The Humane Gardener](#)

See accompanying our [blog post](#) for additional information.

Low groundcovers that may volunteer in developing garden habitat:

Acalypha rhomboidea (Three-seeded mercury)
Circaea lutetiana (Enchanter's nightshade)
Cryptotaenia canadensis (Honewort)
Erigeron annuus*, *Erigeron philadelphicus (Fleabanes)
Geum canadense (White avens)
Muhlenbergia schreberi (Nimblewill)
Pilea pumila (Clearweed)
Sanicula canadensis (Canadian black snakeroot)
[Viola sororia](#) (Common blue violet)

Low groundcovers to plant in understory or, in some cases, beneath sun-loving wildflowers:

[Anemone canadensis](#) (Canada anemone)
[Antennaria spp](#) (Pussytoes)
[Asarum canadense](#) (Wild ginger)
Carex pensylvanica*, *C. appalachica*, *C. stricta*, *C. blanda*, *C. platyphylla,
and more! ([Sedges](#))
[Chrysogonum virginianum](#) (Green-and-gold)
Clinopodium vulgare (Wild basil)
[Erigeron pulchellus](#) (Robin's plantain)
[Eurybia divaricata](#) (White wood aster)
[Fragaria virginiana](#) (Wild strawberry)
[Geranium maculatum](#) (Wild geranium)
[Packera aurea](#) (Golden ragwort) – evergreen
[Podophyllum peltatum](#) (Mayapples): will disappear with onset of heat, so mix in white wood aster, Christmas ferns, woodland stonecrop, wild geranium and other native groundcovers
[Salvia lyrata](#) (Lyreleaf sage)
[Viola](#) spp (Violets)

Ferns that can compete with invasives and/or prevent further encroachment:

[*Athyrium felix-femina*](#) (Lady fern)

[*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*](#) (Hayscented fern)

[*Matteuccia struthiopteris*](#) (Ostrich fern)

[*Onoclea sensibilis*](#) (Sensitive fern)

[*Osmunda cinnamomea*](#) (Cinnamon fern)

[*Osmunda regalis*](#) (Royal fern)

Taller herbaceous plants that can shade or hold the ground and prevent encroachment:

[*Baptisia australis*](#) (False indigo)

[*Boehmeria cylindrica*](#) (False nettle)

[*Conoclinium coelestinum*](#) (Blue mistflower)

[*Elephantopus carolinianus*](#) (Elephant's foot)

[*Helianthus divaricatus*](#) (Woodland sunflower)

[*Helianthus tuberosus*](#) (Jerusalem artichoke)

[*Impatiens capensis*](#) (Jewelweed)

[*Monarda didyma*](#) (Bee balm and wild bergamot)

[*Rudbeckia laciniata*](#), [*R. triloba*](#), [*R. fulgida*](#) (cutleaf coneflower, brown- and black-eyed susans)

[*Pycnanthemum muticum*](#) (Mountain mint)

[*Senna marilandica*](#) or [*S. hebecarpa*](#) (Maryland senna or wild senna)

[*Silphium perfoliatum*](#) (Cup plant)

[*Solidago spp*](#) (Goldenrods)

[*Symphotrichum*](#) spp (Asters- aromatic aster, smooth aster, frost aster)

Grasses that can cast shade, compete, or hold the ground:

[*Chasmanthium latifolium*](#) (Woodoats)

[*Deschampsia cespitosa*](#) (Tufted hairgrass) – evergreen

[*Eragrostis spectabilis*](#) (Purple lovegrass)

[*Muhlenbergia schreberi*](#) (Nimblewill)

[*Panicum virgatum*](#) (Switchgrass)

[*Tridens flavus*](#) (Purpletop grass)

Shrubs/trees and vines that help prevent encroachment by invasive shrubs/vines:

[*Aronia melanocarpa*](#) (Black chokeberry)

[*Clematis virginiana*](#) (Virgin's bower)

[*Cornus spp.*](#) (Dogwood shrubs)

[*Hypericum prolificum*](#) (Shrubby St. Johns wort)

[*Lonicera sempervirens*](#) (Coral honeysuckle vine)

[*Myrica pensylvanica*](#) (Bayberry)

[*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*](#) (Virginia creeper vine)– also makes a great groundcover

[*Rosa spp.*](#) (Roses, like pasture/Virginia rose and Carolina rose)

[*Rhus aromatica*](#) (Fragrant sumac) and other Sumac species

[*Sambucus canadensis*](#) (Elderberry)

[*Sassafras albidum*](#) (Sassafras)

[*Vitis spp*](#) (Grapevines)

Competitions worth instigating, replacing a patch at a time and/or inserting plants directly:

Virginia creeper vs. English ivy

Woodoats/nimblewill/jewelweed/blue waxweed vs. Japanese stiltgrass

Eastern woodland sedge vs. Japanese stiltgrass

Golden ragwort/Canadian black snakeroot/clearweed vs. garlic mustard

Coral honeysuckle vs. Japanese honeysuckle, Oriental bittersweet (remove and replace)

Honewort/Canada anemone/cup plant vs. goutweed

Jerusalem artichoke vs. burning bushes (that are growing in sun) and mugwort

Mountain mint/obedient plant/common milkweed/black raspberry and/or pokeweed
vs. mugwort

Silky dogwoods/gray dogwoods mixed with native groundcovers vs. Bradford pears

Violets vs. mock strawberry

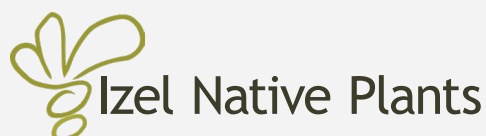
Books with insights on native competition and/or visual inspiration for plant combinations:

Bringing Back the Bush by Joan Bradley

Garden Revolution by Larry Weaner and Thomas Christopher

Planting in a Post-Wild World by Thomas Rainer and Claudia West

The Living Landscape by Rick Darke and Doug Tallamy



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