

Thurston Nature Center (TNC) Plant Policy

The goal of this policy is to improve the biodiversity of plant life within Thurston Nature Center (TNC), using native plants that can successfully grow and benefit native wildlife, such as bees, butterflies, moths, birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and fish.

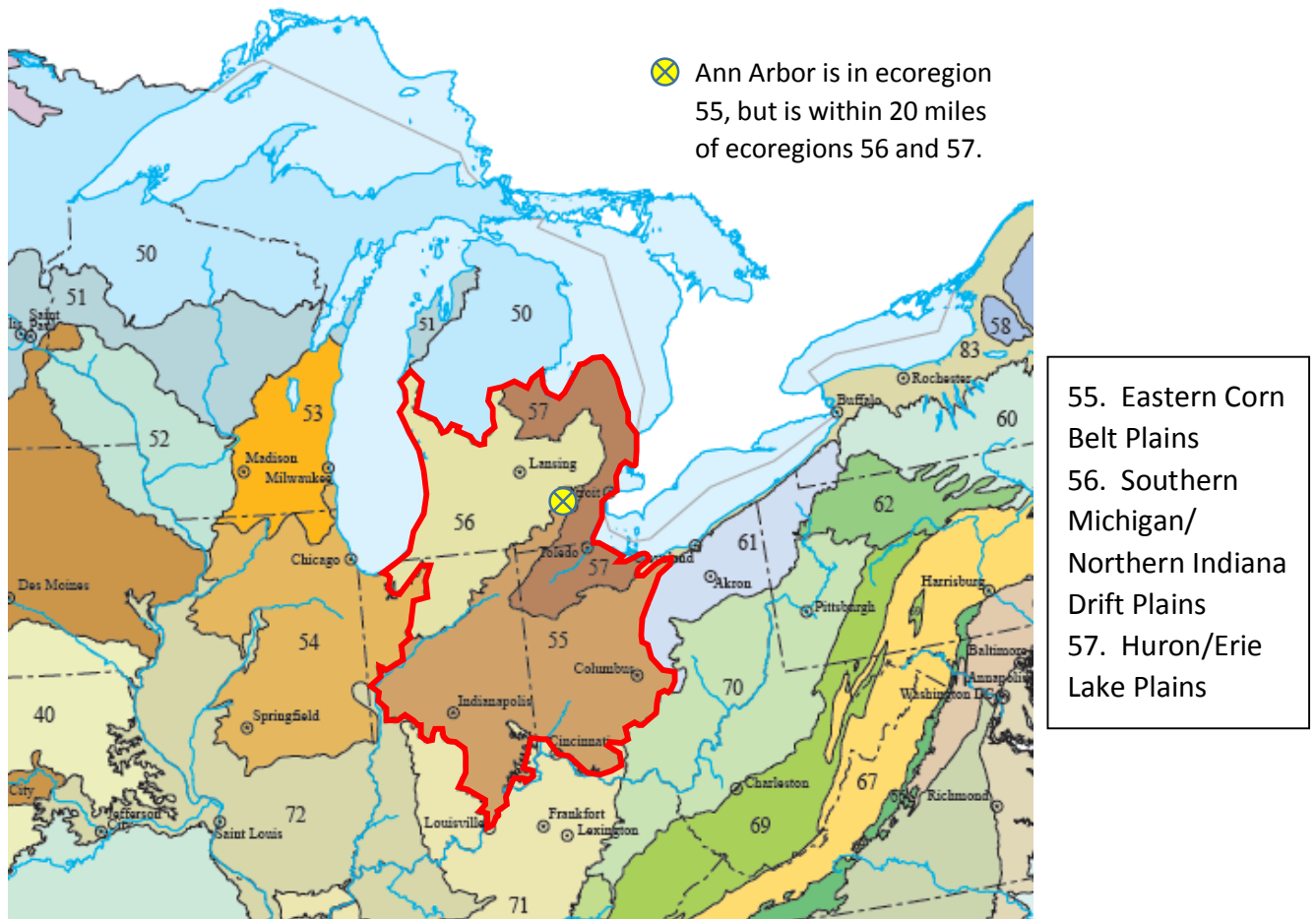
To prevent the introduction and spread of undesirable plants within the Thurston Nature Center, all new planting requires prior review and approval from the Land Steward (for land-based plants) or Water Steward (for water-based plants) or his/her designee(s), as listed on the Center's website. The review will ensure that the following criteria are followed, and that the planting is consistent with any long-term habitat or land use plans.

1. Only plants native to Michigan or our adjoining ecoregions south into western Ohio and eastern Indiana, are to be planted in TNC. Proposed plants should be checked for native status via maps or databases such as those at:
 - a. <http://plants.usda.gov/java/nameSearch> (zoom in to see status by county)
 - b. <http://www.nativeplant.com/plants/search/input>
 - c. <http://www.prairiemoon.com/>
2. Plants that are native to, and sourced from, Washtenaw County or Southeast Michigan are preferred.
3. Naturally-occurring varieties are preferred over cultivars, to enhance biodiversity and usability by the native wildlife community.
4. Plants should be generally non-aggressive, meaning they should not tend to take over an area to the detriment of other desired plants.
5. Species that already have a large presence within the Center should not be introduced into additional areas if greater ecological benefit would come from the introduction of new species, or an increase in the number of plants of existing, but underrepresented, species.
6. Plant selection and placement should comprehend the need for future maintenance. This includes nurturing of new plantings, especially watering. New trees and shrubs should have long-term care and protection arranged via our adopt-a-tree program.
7. Transplanting of plants from one TNC location to another should be based on the same criteria and goals outlined here for new plantings.
8. Removal of existing non-native or overly aggressive plants is generally encouraged. Removal of other (native) plants shall be for purposes such as trail maintenance, plant health improvement, or increased biodiversity. Non-chemical means are to be used for plant removal except in situations where there is no viable alternative, such as with phragmites control.
9. While the TNCC does not have oversight over plantings in the Thurston Elementary schoolyard, TNCC members may be involved with such planting, and should encourage use of Michigan-native, non-aggressive plants, (a) to help prevent spread of undesirable plants into the nature center, and (b) as an educational opportunity for the Thurston staff and students.

Our Local Ecoregions

The World Wildlife Fund defines an ecoregion as a "large unit of land or water containing a geographically distinct assemblage of species, natural communities, and environmental conditions".

EPA Level 3 Ecoregions



Per our policy, top priority will be given to plants native to, and originating in, Washtenaw County and SE Michigan. The Thurston Nature Center has had a long-standing policy of favoring plants that are native anywhere in the state of Michigan, and that policy continues. However, due to global warming, we are shifting our focus towards the southern part of the state, and into the portions of Ohio and Indiana that are within the red border above. These three adjoining ecoregions have very similar climate conditions and native plant and animal species as occur here.