

SO WHAT IS NATIVE ANYWAY?

This is a good question and there are many different views on the subject. We are a regional nursery, supplying the New England states. Here is our definition.

We consider native those plants whose natural ranges are in our area; so what is our area? Some folks narrow it down to state or even county. Our New England Woodlanders series lists only perennials that grow naturally in the New England states. We use the *Flora of the Northeast* by Magee and Ahles as our text book.

Many wonderful plants are listed in this book whose natural ranges are further south and west. We don't include them as New England Woodlanders because we are trying to keep our list as accurate as possible.

For this reason we also have an Appalachian Woodlander list. There are so many great woodland plants that grow south of us and thrive in our area. The theory is that these plants were growing here before the last ice age. The ice cap extended and moved down to the Delaware Water Gap, rumbling, gouging, and taking these plants along with it. Somehow when other plants moved back north, these plants did not. They do grow well here, so we have put them in the Appalachian Woodlander series.

Then is the question of whether native can only mean open pollinated plant (ones that grow by natural seed reproduction in nature) versus selected cultivars. We have debated this one for years and here is where we stand. In our woodlander lines, we only use open pollinated plants, with a very few exceptions. The main reason is that there are not that many horticultural selections in these plants. And the selections that exist are extremely slow to propagate and would be too expensive to put out in the trade. We consider these to be collectors' plants.

In our New England Meadow line, we do use cultivars. Most of our customers are working with ornamental gardens, not mitigation projects. Since there are so many good cultivars available in the sun meadow plants, (think Monardas,

Eupatoriums, Asters etc), we felt it would be a mistake not to include them. Most of these plants started as chance seedlings in a garden and happened to have a great flower color, growth habit or disease resistance. An attentive gardener noticed it and started propagating it from cuttings or divisions, thus cloning these traits. These are plants with native genes, and once in the garden, they will flower and seed and spread mixed seedlings. So we have included them in our New England Meadow line.

In our catalog we also note any plant that is a U.S. native but grows outside of the ranges covered by the lists mentioned above. We hope this clears up any confusion and we welcome your input on this 'much debated' topic.