

Plant Giveaway/Swap

A project from Homegrown National Park®

What to know

A fun, community-based event where the community can gather to exchange seeds, seedlings, and plants. It promotes local plant diversity, sustainable gardening, and community connections. This is a great low-risk opportunity for beginners to give native plants a try.

Season

Spring, Fall

For

Communities, Teams, Families, Schools

Event Duration

1+ Hour

Instructions

Step 1 | Choose the Date & Time

You'll want to host this event in the early spring or fall before people have had time to get plants in the ground. Choose a weekend or weeknight time that's accessible to your community.

Step 2 | Secure a Location & Consider a Sponsor

Some location options include a community center, apartment courtyard, farmers market, coffee shop, garden club building, or your own yard. If you are hosting a swap you will want to have extra plants on hand for those who pop in without giving a plant first.

💡 Consider asking whether a local group can co-host or sponsor the event, such as a nursery, garden club, native plant society, or community organization. Sponsors may help with space, promotion, or materials. They may also come with a bit of expertise of local species.

💡 If you don't have a sponsor, consider a suggested donation or charging a flat fee per person to help cover material costs (containers, soil, and plants are typically the biggest expense). See full materials list below.

Step 3 | Determine Group Size & Registration

Decide how many people you can support based on your space and materials cost. Setting up a simple sign-up form, Eventbrite, or Facebook Event are good options.

Step 4 | Promote the Event

Some methods for advertising:

- Email announcement
- Facebook Event
- Flyer for local sharing

Optional: Encourage participants to bring a friend.

Optional: Invite local Native Plant Society, Wild Ones, garden clubs, etc. to join. They come well prepared, knowledgeable, and often have extra plants to share.

Here is a general description to help you begin your advertising:

Local Plant Swap

Join us for a native plant swap! Bring seedlings, full plants or seeds from your garden to trade with neighbors, or just come browse and take home something new. It's a free, easy way to fill your yard with plants that support local pollinators and birds. No plants to share? Come anyway, extras and planting tips will be on hand for beginners.

Below is our recommended timeline:

Social media

Post 1–2 weeks before your event (include photos, the film trailer, or graphics)

Create a Facebook event and invite your network

Tag local groups, organizations, or influencers

Email

Send a save-the-date, a reminder 1-2 weeks before, and a final reminder the day before

Flyers

Hang them at libraries, cafés, schools, and community centers

Partnerships

Ask local nurseries, conservation groups, or schools to co-host or spread the word

Step 5 | Gather Plants Ahead of Time

If you have tons of extra native plants, then you may have enough to start with. If not, gather some interested neighbors and have them drop off plants ahead of time. Even if you are hosting a swap it's a good idea to get some plants ahead of time so you are well stocked from the beginning. You will also want to create a small sign for each plant with some important information. Some things to consider include:

- Is the plant a native species?
- Does this plant do okay in a container or does it need to be transplanted?

- Common Name
- Scientific Name
- Light requirements
- Tree, Shrub, Flower, Ground Cover etc.
- Height
- Spread
- If it's a keystone species

Important Note: How to prevent plant disease spreading

Before You Bring a Plant

- ☐ Inspect leaves & stems: no spots, wilting, curling, or mold.
- ☐ Check roots: firm and white, not black, mushy, or smelly.
- ☐ Look for pests: check under leaves for aphids, mites, or sticky residue.
- ☐ Use clean soil/pots: ideally, repot in fresh, sterile potting mix.
- ☐ Consider bare-rooting: exchanging without soil helps stop hidden soil pests.

At the Swap

- ☐ Only trade healthy, pest-free plants.
- ☐ Be open and honest—if your plant has had issues in the past, share that info.
- ☐ Keep plants labeled with names and growing needs.

When You Bring Plants Home

- ☐ Quarantine new plants for 3-6 weeks before introducing them to your existing garden.
- ☐ Re-pot in clean containers and fresh soil when possible.
- ☐ Monitor daily for signs of stress, pests, or disease.
- ☐ Sanitize tools after handling new plants.

Event Day

Step 6 | Set Up the Space

Arrange tables so people can walk around and see all the plants. When people bring plants to drop off, it's important that you ensure the plant is a native species, and know the water and light requirements, and height. Prepare the table with clearly marked categories, such as:

- Spring Bloom, Fall Bloom, Summer Bloom
- Shade Tolerant, Sun loving, Attracts Butterflies

Step 7 | Welcome Participants

For those who bring plants to swap you want to ensure that the plant is native and gets labeled correctly. Guide people through the table and help them decide which plants might be best suited to their needs. This is where members of local native plant groups can be super helpful! Some questions to ask may be:

- Do you have a yard to plant this in?
- What are the light conditions of the area you are thinking of?
- Do you have pets? (not all native plants are safe for household animals)
- Do you already have existing native plants on your property?

Step 8 | Wrap Up & Send Participants Home with Their Plants

Remind people to:

- Water regularly until plants are established
- Get connected to the native plant community if they aren't already
- Prevent disease from spreading by
 - Quarantine new plants for 3-6 weeks before introducing them to your existing garden.
 - Re-pot in clean containers and fresh soil when possible.
 - Monitor daily for signs of stress, pests, or disease.
 - Sanitize tools after handling new plants.

Encourage participants to add their new native plants on the [HNP Biodiversity Map](#).

 Instead of printing out a ton of take-home papers, give them an [HNP bookmark](#) so they have the QR code when they get home.

Step 9 | Report Back and Help Us Improve!

Sharing your attendance numbers and event details is crucial. Your input directly helps us measure our collective impact and improve our resources. Did you do something special? We would love to see your marketing materials, photos, and hear about unique details to feature and incorporate for future events! [Contribute Your Feedback Here](#)

Keep in Mind

- Create a welcoming, inclusive experience for all ages and abilities.
- Create an easy entry point for a beginner.
- People will want to know care instructions for when they get home

Materials

(Complete supply checklist)

- ☐ [HNP flyers/brochures](#)
 -  Single laminated copy with a QR code or listed in a follow-up email instead of printing
- ☐ How to prevent plant disease spreading checklist for participants (below)
- ☐ Tables
- ☐ Plant Signage

Related HNP Activities

- [Native Plant/Seed Library](#) - Donate extra plants, or get plants from an overflowing library
- [Winter Seed Sowing Party](#) - Planting all plugs from the winter prior
- [Container Gardening Party](#) - Have attendees bring container-friendly plants and come home with a whole new plant in a nice pot.

Examples



How to prevent plant disease spreading

Before You Bring a Plant

- Inspect leaves & stems: no spots, wilting, curling, or mold.
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- Look for pests: check under leaves for aphids, mites, or sticky residue.
- Use clean soil/pots: ideally, repot in fresh, sterile potting mix.
- Consider bare-rooting: exchanging without soil helps stop hidden soil pests.

At the Swap

- Only trade healthy, pest-free plants.
- Be open and honest—if your plant has had issues in the past, share that info.
- Keep plants labeled with names and growing needs.

When You Bring Plants Home

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