

Venema Plaza & Gardens at Calvin Ecosystem Preserve & Native Gardens



Native Gardens Map Key

- 1 Native Edge Gardens
- 2 Lawn Reduction Prairie Slope Demonstration
- 3 Four Seasons Garden
- 4 Tallgrass Prairie Demonstration
- 5 Sedge Garden
- 6 Germination Beds
- 7 Glasshouse Garden
- 8 Woodland Garden
- 9A Shade
- 9B Sun
- 10A Shade
- 10B Sun
- 11 Shade Gardens
- 12A Loam
- 12B Sand
- 13 Rain Garden
- 14 Crescent Garden
- 15A Formalized
- 15B Naturalized
- 16 Native Groundcover Garden Beds
- 17 Oak Savanna Garden
- 18 Shortgrass Prairie Demonstration
- 19A Bird Feeder Garden
- 19B Songbird Garden
- 19C Hummingbird Garden
- 19D Bird Shrub Garden
- 20 Sand Prairie Demonstration
- 21 Prince Pond Shoreline Restoration Demonstration
- 22 Campus Connector
- 23 Bus Turnaround
- 24 Gardeners Cottage
- 25 Glasshouse
- 26 Courtyard
- 27 Arbor Overlook
- 28 Plaza
- 29 Boardwalk
- Overlook (accessible)
- Seating
- Paved Path (accessible)
- Gravel or Woodchip Path
- Brick
- Bridge
- Native Gardens Boundary
- Parking
- Accessible Parking
- Restrooms & Drinking Fountain
- First Aid
- Bike Rack
- Bird Feeder
- Emergency Phone

Thank you for visiting!

The Calvin Ecosystem Preserve & Native Gardens conserves, restores and interprets native ecosystems to inspire people to value and protect the wonder of creation.

While you're here, check out the Bunker Interpretive Center to interact with our displays, and find out more about our educational programs at 616-526-7600 or calvin.edu/go/preserve. Restrooms and first aid are available in the vestibule.



Trails and Gardens are open to the public every day from dawn to dusk. Admission is free.

To ensure your safety and the preservation of our plants and animals, please respect these rules:

- Stay on Path
- No Running
- Do Not Pick Flowers
- No Skiing
- No Dogs
- No Biking

TO PRINCE CONFERENCE CENTER & PARKING LOT 16

TO OVERFLOW PARKING & LOT 13

TO MAIN CAMPUS



Welcome to West Michigan's largest native public demonstration gardens.

1 Native Edge Gardens

This garden is named in honor of Native Edge, the business that helped us design the gardens. It features alternating patterns of short showy flowers and grasses that provide a transition between our formal areas and wild spaces.

2 Lawn Reduction Prairie Slope Demonstration

Have a steep hill that is hard to mow? Replace it with short and showy prairie grasses and flowers that thrive with little water. Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) is the dominant grass featured in this space.

3 Four Seasons Garden

Our main entrance garden is filled with flowers that bloom spring through fall and have intriguing seed heads for winter interest.

4 Tall Grass Prairie Demonstration

This is a native grassland community dominated by big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) and Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*). Our tallgrass mesic prairie was damaged during construction and is the process of being replanted.

5 Sedge Garden

Sedges are grass-like perennials in the Carex family that provide movement and texture to gardens as well as seeds for wildlife. They thrive in a variety of conditions and are easy to grow. Our garden is composed with four species of sedges and intermixed with golden alexander (*Zizia aurea*) and wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*).

6 Germination Beds

These raised beds will be used to cultivate hard to grow spring ephemerals as well as other species that require their seeds to be directly sown in the ground.

7 Glasshouse Gardens

Our glasshouse gardens feature seasonal displays of non-native annuals and herbs that provide nectar for butterflies and host plants for their caterpillars. While native plants are best for our pollinators, these species provide supplemental food for pollinators and add color in your gardens.

8 Woodland Garden

Notice the difference between this space and the woods to the north of the trail. Invasive Buckthorn (*Rhamnus sp.*) was removed from the understory of this garden to make way for spring ephemerals such as Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) and Mayapples (*Podophyllum peltatum*).

9A Cottage Garden: Shade

Looking for plants that thrive on the north side of your house and under trees? Our shady cottage garden is composed of a variety of flowers and sedges that are grown for the unique textures of their leaves.

9B Cottage Garden: Sun

Our sunny cottage garden is designed in the English cottage garden style with all native plants. Filled with showy species of flowers that provide four-season color, this is an example of a small garden space that homeowners can replicate in their yard.

10 A Courtyard: Shade & Sun

Brimming with a variety of our favorite flowers for both sun and shade, the sunny courtyard gardens contain only nine species of forbs and grasses repeated in large sections throughout the space. Yellow is the predominant color of the blooms with touches of white and purple.

11 Shade

Our shade garden is composed of with a variety of species such as spring ephemerals, ferns, sedges, and shrubs that thrive in part shade and shade.

12 A Pollinator Gardens: Loam & Sand

Providing wildflower-rich habitat is a significant action you can take to support pollinators. Research indicates that native plants are usually the best sources of nectar and pollen for native pollinators. These gardens are brimming with nectar-rich flowers that thrive in loamy or sandy soils.

13 Rain Garden

A rain garden is a shallow depression that collects stormwater runoff from a roof, driveway, walkway, parking lot or yard, and allows it to infiltrate the ground to reduce erosion, water pollution, and flooding. These plants thrive in wet soils.

14 Crescent Garden

This garden showcases our staff's favorite short and showy species that thrive in sand and sun.

15 A South Pond Shoreline Stabilization Demonstration: Formal & Naturalized

Featured are two styles of stabilizing a shoreline to reduce erosion of soils into the pond, thus improving water quality.

16 Native Groundcover Garden Beds

Have a space under a tree where lawn will not grow? Replace it with native groundcover plants. Staff favorites in these spaces include wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), wood poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*), and a variety of sedges such as plantain sedge (*Carex plantaginea*).

17 Oak Savanna Garden

Representative of an unusual natural community in Michigan, this fire-dependent savanna is dominated by oaks. The predominantly grass ground layer is composed of species associated with both prairie and forest communities such as little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*). This garden will be abundant with wild lupine (*Lupinus perennis*) in June.

18 Shortgrass Prairie Demonstration

This demonstration garden is dominated by little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) and is filled with short showy flowers that thrive in full sun and with little water.

19 A- Bird Gardens

Birds depend on native plants to thrive. Plants in these gardens provide essential insects, berries, seeds, nectar, and shelter for our feathered friends. Nearly all land birds (96%) feed their chicks the insects feeding on native plants.

19 A Songbird Garden

19 B Bird Feeder Garden

19 C Hummingbird Garden

19 D Bird Shrub Garden

20 Sand Prairie Demonstration

A native grassland community, this demonstration garden is dominated by little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and flowering plants such as wormwood (*Artemisia campestris*) and horsemint (*Monarda punctata*) that thrive in sand. Vegetation is patchy and short in comparison to other prairie communities.

21 Prince Pond Shoreline Restoration Demonstration

Restoration on this site is in progress. Started the summer of 2017 with the removal of a multitude of invasive species, our next step is to return native plants to the area.

Discover, Be Inspired & Relax

Our gardens are a living field guide of more than 200 species of native plants found in Michigan reflecting our rich natural heritage. Inhabiting areas before European settlement, research shows that native plants provide food and habitat for wildlife, clean our water, soil, and air, and need less care than nonnative plants in a garden setting. Enjoy exploring our twenty-one themed gardens each season to experience the rich diversity of plants and pollinators found in these gardens.

Watch Our Gardens Grow & Bloom

Planted fall of 2018 and dedicated on May 11, 2019, our new garden is a work in progress. We will have a lush garden that really shines in about three years. Enjoy watching our gardens grow and bloom.

Purchase Native Plants

Our annual native plant sale featuring more than 90 species is held the first Saturday in May each year. The Glasshouse is stocked with our favorite species for you to purchase from May to September during normal business hours. Proceeds support educational and stewardship projects at the Preserve.

