

# Massachusetts Native Plant Palette

MA Water Resources Commission  
March 14, 2024





## **why native?**

- Frequent droughts underscore importance of environmentally friendly landscaping.
- Native plants often use less water, are wildlife and pollinator friendly, and have other ecobenefits
- Represents important intervention for non-essential water use- outdoor water use in summer months is especially taxing on stressed water supplies
- Promotes climate resilience in drought years and beyond

# the problem

- Frequent droughts underscore importance of native and drought resistant plants
- Current tools are robust and practical, but geared towards an audience with value systems that **already prioritize environmentally friendly behavior**
- Many tools require pre-existing knowledge of gardening/ecological landscaping and assume a certain level of technical proficiency
- May be opportunities to expand how these tools are utilized and marketed



## **our approach**

- In the process of developing a web guide that focuses on **expanding accessibility** and **streamlined aesthetics**
- Web guide **does not replace existing tools**, but offers new pathways for new people to engage with them
- Hope to diversify incentives for engaging in environmentally friendly/drought tolerant landscaping behavior



# MASSACHUSETTS NATIVE



**PLANT PALETTE**



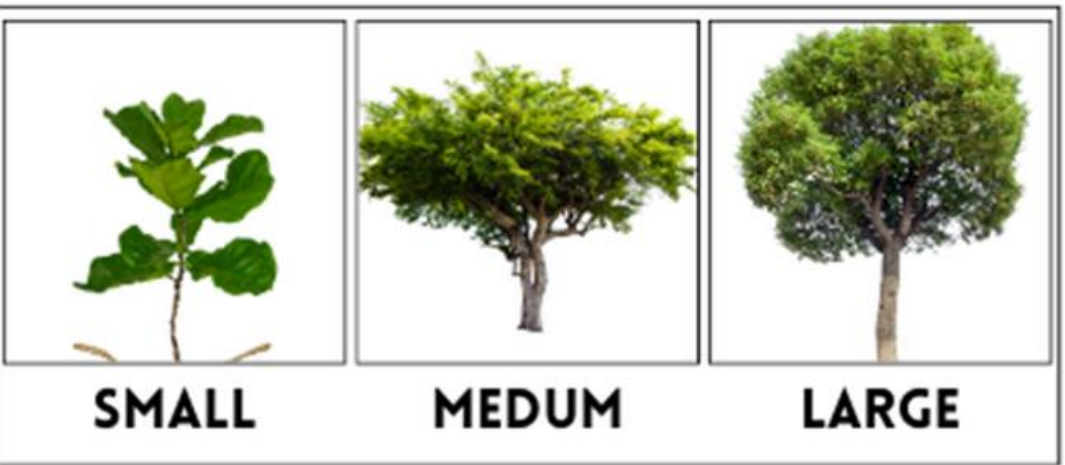
*explore here* →

 *filter plants*

**TYPE**



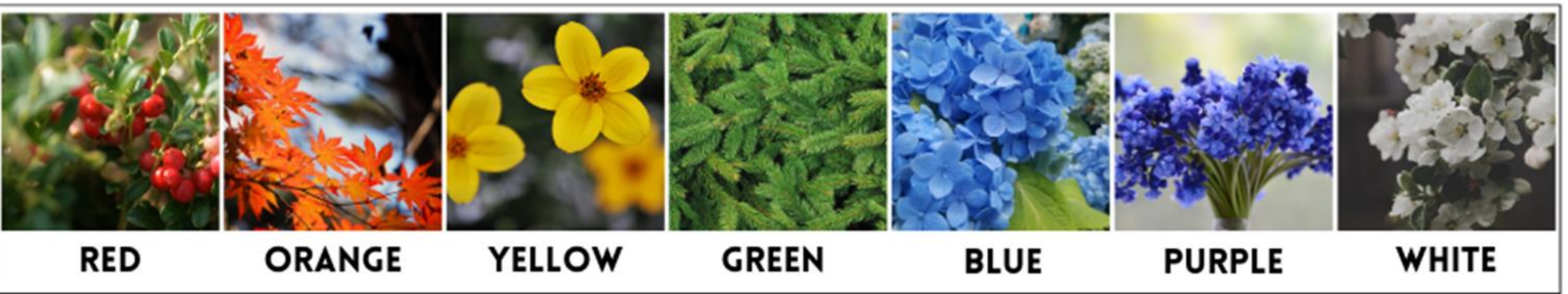
**SIZE**



**SUN**



**COLOR**





# TREE SELECTION

Search for your tree...

Filter Type:

AND



OR



Form



Fruit



Tolerances



Size



## POPULAR TREES



Abies balsamea



Abies concolor



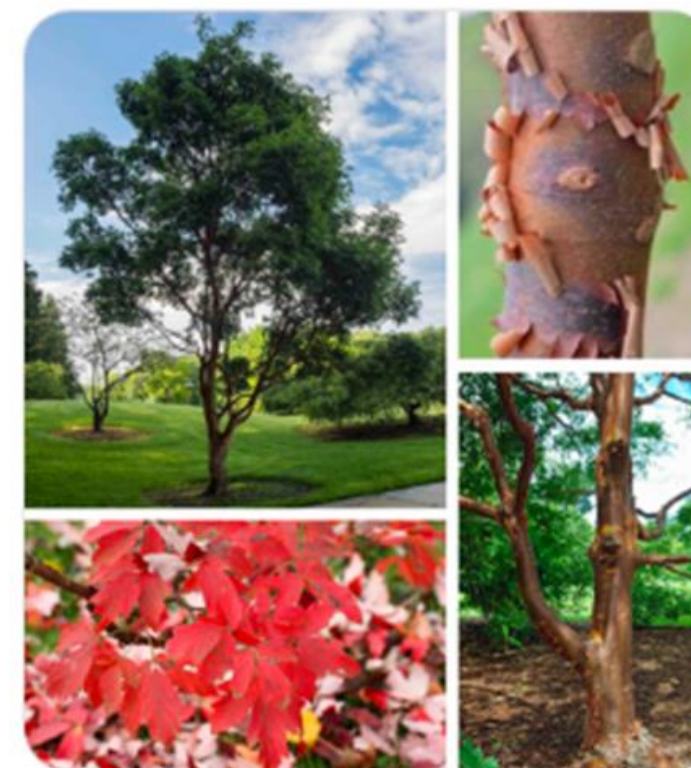
Abies fraseri



Acer rubrum



Acer rubrum 'Fastigiata'



Acer griseum





## **why now?**

- Commonwealth has experienced some success in water conservation, may be productive to diversify approach to conservation education
- Time to ask: **who is the environmental community leaving out and how can we expand our efforts to include them?**
- Can we more effectively inspire behavior change that benefits the environment?



Evidence of  
effective  
behavior change

Is everyone engaging?  
What are the  
barriers?

**traditional approach**



trust in local/national leadership?

too homogeneous?

too technical?

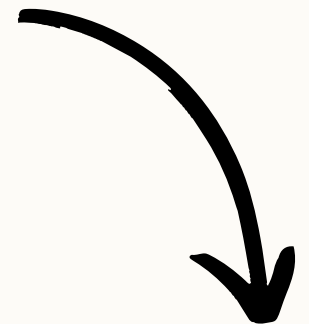
Community Based  
Social Marketing!

resource constraints?

Is everyone engaging?

What are the  
barriers?

overstimulating?



**traditional approach**



By expanding the pathways to engagement we might:

- Increase trust/builds relationships
- Reach more people
- Inspire meaningful education
- Shift narrative from scarcity
- Reduce water use and protect the environment

**proposed approach**



# beyond the app

A connection to local resources:

- Greenscapes (North and South Rivers Watershed Association)
- Growing Wild for Pollinators Plant Giveaways (DCR)

*Greenscapes Guide*  
Creating a beautiful healthy yard the natural way...



Interested in including your knowledge of local resources



## **what's next?**

- Develop a prototype web guide
- Collect and incorporate feedback
- Partner with nurseries to display plant availability
- Rollout full version
- Implement marketing for web guide
- Brainstorm how to suggest “palette” of plants to potential native plant gardeners

# Thank you,

to the Water Resources Commission for your funding and support for these efforts

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