

## Garden Update

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### Great Plants for the Great Plains

Each year, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, along with the Nebraska Nursery and Landscape Association, highlight plants that are exceptional additions to Midwest landscapes. Plants are chosen not only for their beauty but also their durability. Those headlining 2021's picks for Great Plants for the Great Plains include:

**Tree of the Year:** Hackberry, *Celtis occidentalis*. This close relative of the elm is Dutch elm disease resistant and tough-as-nails with beautiful bark and outstanding form. It grows well in a variety of soils and windy conditions.

**Conifer of the Year:** Eastern white pine, *Pinus strobus*. This is a soft needled pine and not as prone to problems with pine wilt as other pines are. This is large tree, reaching a height of 60 feet or so with a spread of 30 feet.

**Shrub of the Year:** Chiquita Sargent viburnum, *Viburnum sargentii* 'Chiquita'. White flat-topped flowers are followed by red fruits, with the shrub reaching the size of 6 feet tall and wide. Good for windbreaks, hedgerows, or as a specimen in front yards, 'Chiquita' features yellow-orange fall leaf color.

**Perennial of the Year:** Swamp milkweed, *Asclepias incarnata*. Like many milkweeds, swamp milkweed is a favored food for both adult and larval stages of the monarch butterfly. Flowers are pink atop 3-foot-tall plants. Well suited to wet places as its name implies, swamp milkweed can also be grown in well-drained soils and full sun.

**Grass of the Year:** Morning Light maiden grass, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light'. 'Morning Light' gets its name from the small band of white at the leaf margins, giving them a silvery appearance. Featuring graceful arching stems and flower heads with a hint of red, 'Morning Light' is considered one of the most beautiful of the maiden grasses. Overall, this clump-forming grass can reach 6 feet in height when in flower.

While the Midwest can be a challenging place to grow plants, the Great Plants for the Great Plains program highlights the best variety of plants, both native and adapted, to grace our landscapes.