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There is much plant life in New York City. Many different species live within the small state, despite its years of building infrastructure and paving over natural land.

Due to New York City’s location between three different bodies of water, its geological and geological areas are diverse. As a result, many different types of ecosystems, and a large number of native plant species, occur in this area, which is relatively small to New York State as a whole. In all, 60.3% of native plant species found in the state have been collected in New York City.

While 17% of New York City is parkland, only 25% of this parkland can be considered “natural area”, which is land that is composed mostly of unmanaged vegetation.

Collected from the mid-19th century up until 2000, there is said to be 2177 native and alien species within New York City. The native species have been more likely to become destroyed than non-native species. This is mostly due to succession and competition with aggressive alien plant species.

Other threats on plant life in New York City include infrastructure expansion, such as highways, parking lots, and buildings, as well as illegal fires and vehicular usage. Atmospheric causes such as drought, pollution and increased soil acidity greatly influence plant life.

In order to preserve the integrity of the wildlife in New York City, Parks and Recreation departments must focus on planting native species of plants in any restoration or renewal project.
NATIVE PLANTS OF NEW YORK CITY
Wild Blue Lupine

(Lupinus perennis) Pea family. Grows to 2 ft. A spire of showy blue flowers in May above dissected foliage. Attracts butterflies. Sole food source for Karner blue butterfly. The legume seeds of lupins, commonly called lupin beans, were popular with the Romans, who cultivated the plants throughout the Roman Empire; hence, common names like lupini in Romance languages. Whilst originally cultivated as a green manure or forage, lupins are increasingly grown for their seeds, which can be used as an alternative to soybeans. Sweet (low alkaloid) lupins are highly regarded as a stock feed, particularly for ruminants but also for pigs and poultry and more recently as an ingredient in aqua-feeds. The market for lupin seeds for human food is currently small, but researchers believe it has great potential.
American Elm

The American Elm is the largest Elm in the United States. It can reach 130 feet in height and has an elegant vase shape with a broad, rounded crown. In the fall, your American Elm’s foliage transforms to a pleasing yellow. Even in the coldest of seasons, when most trees provide little of interest, the dark grey and deeply furrowed bark of your Elm will present a pleasing feature for the winter landscape. The American Elm is a hardy tree tolerant of drought and urban conditions. The American or White elm is the largest species of elm. Due to its graceful form and size, it was an extremely popular urban tree before the spread of Dutch elm disease. Once found mostly in eastern North America, remaining populations of mature American elms are concentrated in the American Midwest and Canadian Prairies.
Bearberry Shrub

Bearberry is a small evergreen shrub often used as a groundcover. It is an excellent choice to provide winter interest with the tiny leaves that turn bronze in the fall, and the small red berries that last until spring. Bearberry is also useful for drought and salt-tolerant landscapes. Names used for this shrub are bearberry, kinnikinick, mealberry, sandberry, kinnikinnick and hog cranberry. Bearberry grows 6-12” tall and can grow 3-15’ wide. The shape is a dense mat. The leaves are picked any time during the summer and dried for use in infusions, liquid extracts, medicinal tea bags and tablets believed to be potentially effective in folk medicine. Bearberry appears to be relatively safe, although large doses may cause nausea, vomiting, fever, chills, severe back pain and tinnitus. It should not be used during pregnancy, breast feeding, or in children or patients with kidney disease.
Butterfly weed (Asclepias tuberosa)

Asclepias tuberosa is a species of milkweed native to eastern North America. It is a perennial plant growing to 0.3–1 metre (1 ft 0 in–3 ft 3 in) tall, with clustered orange or yellow flowers from early summer to early fall. It is commonly known as Butterfly Weed because of the butterflies that are attracted to the plant by its color and its copious production of nectar. It is also the larval food plant of the Queen and Monarch butterflies. Hummingbirds, bees and other insects are also attracted. They are easy to grow from seeds in the home garden and require only minimal care once established.
Purple Lovegrass

Purple love grass (Eragrostis spectabilis) is a Native American wildflower grass that grows throughout the United States and Mexico. Growing between one and three feet tall with a two foot spread, Purple Lovegrass is a native, warm season, perennial bunch grass that derives its name from the purple-colored flower heads it develops late in summer. Purple lovegrass grows in well-drained, infertile and very sandy soils in open conditions without shading or competition. While it is drought tolerant it does require average soil moisture content. Livestock readily graze purple lovegrass during spring and early summer and in heavily grazed areas, deer dig up and eat the basal part of the stem during the winter.
The Seaside Goldenrod (Sempervirens) is generally described as a perennial forb/herb. This is native to the U.S. has its most active growth period in the spring and summer. The Seaside Goldenrod has dark green foliage and inconspicuous yellow flowers, with a smattering of conspicuous brown fruits or seeds. The greatest bloom is usually observed in the late summer, with fruit and seed production starting in the summer and continuing until fall. Leaves are not retained year to year. The Seaside Goldenrod has a short life span relative to most other plant species and a moderate growth rate. Seaside goldenrod grows in high parts and along the edges of fresh, brackish and salt marshes. It is found in parts of the marsh that are irregularly flooded by tides, and also grows on beaches and sand dunes in coastal areas. It can grow in full or partial sun.
Witch Hazel

Witch-hazel is a genus of flowering plants in the family Hamamelidaceae, with three species in North America, and one each in Japan and China. The name Witch in witch-hazel has its origins in Middle English wiche, from the Old English wice, meaning “pliant” or “bendable”. “Witch hazel” was used in England as a synonym for Wych Elm, Ulmus glabra; American colonists simply extended the familiar name to the new shrub. The use of the twigs as divining rods, just as hazel twigs were used in England, may also have, by folk etymology, influenced the “witch” part of the name. They are popular ornamental plants, grown for their clusters of rich yellow to orange-red flowers which begin to expand in the autumn as or slightly before the leaves fall, and continue throughout the winter.
Personally, I have been gardening with my mother out at my summer house on Long Island since I was little. The significance in the growth of nature has been passed down to me from generations of gardening enthusiasts, and I firmly believe in the importance of cultivating one’s own method of sustenance. Pestesides and contaminated soil has been a huge issue in America in the past few decades, and it is up to the individual to create for themselves save eating alternatives. This is to ensure the health of our future generations, as well as inform and influence the conciousness of those who are alive today.