NEW BRUNSWICK LANDSCAPING

Sustainable Landscaping

Native gardens, rain gardens, xeriscaping, pollinator habitats, and eco-friendly practices for NB

13 Expert Answers from Landscape IQ

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Q1

Best organic pest control for NB gardens?

Organic pest control in New Brunswick gardens works best with a combination of beneficial insects, companion planting, and targeted organic treatments that work within our Maritime climate and short growing season.

The key to successful organic pest control in NB is understanding that our cool, humid Maritime climate creates specific pest pressures while also supporting beneficial insects that can do much of the work for you. **Prevention through healthy soil and proper plant selection** is your first line of defense, followed by encouraging natural predators and using organic interventions only when needed.

Beneficial insects are your best allies in NB gardens. Ladybugs, lacewings, and parasitic wasps naturally control aphids, spider mites, and caterpillars. Plant native flowers like wild bergamot, goldenrod, and asters to provide nectar sources. Yarrow, dill, and sweet alyssum also attract beneficial insects while serving as companion plants. Our relatively late spring (mid-May to early June for last frost) means you can time these plantings to establish before peak pest season in July and August.

Companion planting works exceptionally well in NB's intensive growing season. Marigolds deter many soil pests and nematodes, while basil planted near tomatoes repels hornworms and aphids. Nasturtiums act as trap crops for cucumber beetles and squash bugs. Garlic and chives planted throughout the garden help repel many soft-bodied insects. Since our growing season is compressed into roughly 120-150 days, these companion plants need to be established early to provide season-long protection.

For **targeted organic treatments**, neem oil works well for aphids, spider mites, and early-stage caterpillars, but apply it in the evening to avoid harming beneficial insects. Diatomaceous earth (food grade) effectively controls slugs and crawling insects - particularly important in our humid climate where slugs thrive. **Bt (Bacillus thuringiensis)** specifically targets caterpillars without harming other insects, making it perfect for cabbage worms and tent caterpillars that are common in NB.

Row covers and physical barriers are especially effective in our climate. Floating row covers protect young plants from flea beetles and cabbage moths while creating a warmer microclimate that extends the growing season. Copper strips around raised beds deter slugs, and yellow sticky traps catch aphids and whiteflies before populations explode.

Soil health is crucial for pest resistance. NB's naturally acidic soils (pH 4.5-6.0) often lack the biological activity that supports plant immunity. Adding compost and maintaining proper soil pH (6.0-7.0 for most vegetables) creates conditions where plants can naturally resist pest damage. Healthy plants in well-balanced soil recover faster from

pest pressure and attract fewer insects overall.

Timing matters significantly in our short season. Apply beneficial nematodes to soil in late May when soil temperature reaches 10°C consistently. Release ladybugs in early June when aphid populations typically peak. For preventive spraying with organic treatments, early morning or evening applications work best to avoid harming pollinators during their active hours.

For larger pest problems or integrated pest management planning, consider consulting with a landscaper who understands organic methods. New Brunswick Landscaping can match you with professionals experienced in organic gardening approaches that work specifically in our Maritime climate.

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Q2

How do I build a rain garden in New Brunswick?

A rain garden in New Brunswick is a shallow, planted depression designed to capture and filter stormwater runoff from your roof, driveway, or lawn, reducing erosion, preventing basement flooding, and cleaning water before it reaches NB's rivers and streams. With annual rainfall of 1,100–1,200mm plus significant spring snowmelt, NB properties generate substantial runoff that a rain garden can manage naturally and beautifully.

Choose the right location. Position your rain garden at least **10 feet from your house foundation** to prevent water from seeping toward the basement. It should sit in a natural low point where water already flows or collects, or at the bottom of a slope. Avoid placing it over septic systems, utility lines, or areas where bedrock is close to the surface. The ideal spot receives runoff from a downspout, driveway, or sump pump discharge. Full sun to part shade is best for the widest plant selection.

Size the garden based on your drainage area. A general rule for NB's rainfall volume is that the rain garden should be approximately **20–30% of the impervious area draining into it.** If you're capturing runoff from a 200-square-foot roof section, plan a rain garden of 40–60 square feet. Depth should be **4 to 8 inches** at the deepest point — deep enough to hold water temporarily but shallow enough to drain within 24–48 hours. Water should never stand for more than 48 hours, which prevents mosquito breeding.

Excavate and amend the soil. Dig the garden to your planned depth with gently sloping sides (3:1 slope ratio). NB's native clay-heavy soils (particularly in the Fredericton area and river valleys) drain too slowly for a rain garden, so replace or amend the bottom 12–18 inches of soil with a mix of **60% sand, 20% compost, and 20% topsoil.** This engineered soil drains quickly while retaining enough moisture for plants. Sandy coastal soils near Moncton and Shediac may only need minimal amendment. Create a shallow berm on the downhill side to retain water, with a small overflow outlet for heavy storms.

Plant with NB-adapted moisture-tolerant species. The centre (wettest zone) handles plants like **blue flag iris, Joe-Pye weed, and cardinal flower.** The middle zone suits **New England aster, bee balm, and switchgrass.** The edges (drier zone) support **black-eyed Susan, wild bergamot, and native sedges.** All these are native or adapted to New Brunswick and tolerate both the periodic flooding and dry periods a rain garden experiences. Plant densely — 1 plant per square foot — to establish quickly and suppress weeds.

A rain garden in New Brunswick costs **$500 to $2,000** depending on size, soil amendment needs, and plant choices. Direct a downspout into the garden using a buried 4-inch corrugated pipe or a surface-level stone channel. Mulch with 2–3 inches of shredded hardwood bark (not stone, which reduces infiltration). Maintenance is minimal — weed occasionally during the first two years until plants fill in, and remove accumulated sediment from the inlet area annually each spring.

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Q3

What native groundcovers can replace lawn grass in New Brunswick?

The best native groundcovers to replace lawn grass in New Brunswick include wild strawberry, bunchberry, creeping juniper, bearberry, and native sedges — all of which thrive in NB's acidic soils, handle Maritime winters, require no mowing or fertilizing, and support local pollinators and wildlife far better than conventional turf grass.

Wild strawberry (Fragaria virginiana) is one of the most practical lawn alternatives for NB. This native plant spreads by runners to form a dense 4–6 inch mat of attractive trifoliate leaves, produces white flowers in May, and bears small edible berries in June. It tolerates full sun to part shade, thrives in NB's acidic soil, and handles foot traffic reasonably well — not as durable as turf, but suitable for low-traffic areas. It stays green from May through October and goes dormant under snow without issue. Plant plugs 12 inches apart for coverage within 2 growing seasons.

Bunchberry (Cornus canadensis) is a native NB woodland groundcover that thrives in the shaded, acidic conditions where lawn grass struggles most — under trees, along north-facing foundations, and in moist woodland edges. At 4–6 inches tall, it produces miniature white dogwood-like flowers in spring and red berries in fall. Bunchberry requires consistently moist, acidic soil (pH 4.5–5.5, which is naturally common in NB) and spreads by rhizomes to form dense colonies. It's perfect for replacing the patchy, moss-invaded grass under NB's ubiquitous spruce and fir trees.

Bearberry (Arctostaphylos uva-ursi) is a native evergreen groundcover that excels on dry, sandy, or rocky slopes where grass refuses to grow. Common along NB's coastal areas and rocky uplands, bearberry forms a dense 6-inch mat of small leathery leaves that stay green year-round, turn bronzy-red in winter, and produce pink flowers followed by red berries. It's hardy to zone 2, tolerates salt spray, and requires zero maintenance once established — but it needs well-drained soil and full sun.

Creeping juniper (Juniperus horizontalis) is another NB native that provides evergreen groundcover on sunny slopes and dry areas. Varieties like 'Blue Rug' and 'Prince of Wales' grow only 4–6 inches tall and spread 6–8 feet wide. They're drought-tolerant, deer-resistant, and extremely cold-hardy. Creeping juniper is ideal for NB slopes where mowing is difficult or dangerous — it eliminates mowing entirely while preventing erosion.

Native sedges (Carex pensylvanica and Carex eburnea) are the closest native equivalent to a traditional lawn. Pennsylvania sedge grows 6–8 inches tall with fine, grass-like foliage that can be mowed once or twice per season for a tidy appearance — or left unmowed for a meadow look. It tolerates shade, dry conditions, and NB's acidic soil. Plant plugs 6–8 inches apart for a lawn-like coverage within 2–3 years.

Converting lawn to native groundcover in NB costs **$3 to $8 per square foot** for plant material and installation, compared to ongoing annual lawn care costs of $0.50–1.50 per square foot. The investment pays for itself within 3–5 years through eliminated mowing, watering, and fertilizing costs, while creating habitat that supports NB's native bees, butterflies, and songbirds.

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Q4

How do I create a no-mow lawn alternative in New Brunswick?

Creating a no-mow lawn alternative in New Brunswick involves replacing traditional turf grass with low-growing, spreading plants that form a dense groundcover without requiring regular mowing — saving time, fuel, water, and fertilizer while creating a more ecologically valuable landscape. Several approaches work well in NB's Maritime climate and acidic soils.

A clover lawn is the easiest transition for NB homeowners. White Dutch clover (Trifolium repens) grows 4–6 inches tall, stays green from May through November, fixes nitrogen from the air (eliminating the need for fertilizer), and produces white flowers that support pollinators. It tolerates NB's acidic soil better than most lawn grasses and handles moderate foot traffic. Overseed directly into an existing thin lawn at 2–4 ounces per 1,000 square feet in early June, or seed a prepared bed at 6–8 ounces per 1,000 square feet. Microclover varieties grow even shorter (2–3 inches) and produce fewer flowers if that's preferred. A clover lawn costs **$30 to $80 in seed per 1,000 square feet** — a fraction of the annual cost of maintaining a traditional lawn.

A native eco-lawn seed mix combines fine fescues, clover, and native low-growing plants. These mixes are specifically designed for eastern Canadian conditions and grow 4–8 inches tall with a soft, meadow-like appearance. They tolerate NB's acidic soil, require no irrigation after establishment, and need mowing only 2–3 times per season (or not at all for a wilder look). Several Maritime seed suppliers offer eco-lawn blends formulated for NB's climate. Seed in early June after the last frost or in early September for fall establishment.

A creeping thyme lawn works beautifully in full-sun, well-drained areas. Woolly thyme and creeping thyme grow 1–3 inches tall, produce purple flowers in June–July, and release fragrance when walked on. They tolerate light foot traffic, require no mowing, and thrive in the sandy, acidic soils found along NB's coast. However, thyme lawns struggle in heavy clay, shade, and high-traffic areas. Plant from plugs 6–8 inches apart — coverage takes 2 growing seasons. Cost runs **$3 to $6 per square foot** for plant plugs, making it more expensive than seed-based alternatives.

The conversion process requires patience. For any no-mow alternative, start by smothering existing grass. Lay cardboard or 4–6 layers of newspaper over the lawn area in fall, top with 3–4 inches of compost, and let it decompose over winter. By spring, the grass beneath will be dead and the area ready for planting or seeding. This sheet-mulching approach avoids herbicides and improves soil health. Alternatively, rent a sod cutter to remove existing turf — faster but more labour-intensive.

Maintenance in the first two years is critical. Keep newly seeded or planted areas consistently moist through NB's first growing season. Hand-weed regularly until the groundcover establishes enough density to suppress weeds on its own — typically by the second growing season. After establishment, a no-mow lawn in NB needs

virtually no maintenance: perhaps one or two mowings per year if you want a tidier look, no fertilizer, no irrigation (NB's 1,100–1,200mm rainfall is more than adequate), and no herbicides.

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Q5

Does xeriscaping work in New Brunswick's Maritime climate?

Traditional xeriscaping — designed for arid western climates — doesn't directly translate to New Brunswick's wet Maritime environment, but the core principles of water-efficient, low-maintenance landscaping absolutely work and can save NB homeowners significant time and money. The key is adapting xeriscape concepts to Maritime conditions rather than copying a desert-inspired landscape.

What works from xeriscaping in NB. The fundamental xeriscape principles of **grouping plants by water needs, reducing lawn area, improving soil, using efficient irrigation, and choosing appropriate plants** are universally beneficial. NB receives 1,100–1,200mm of rainfall annually — more than enough for most plants — but that rainfall isn't evenly distributed. July and August can bring dry stretches that stress shallow-rooted lawns, and sandy coastal soils near Moncton, Shediac, and Miramichi drain quickly. Applying xeriscape thinking to these conditions means choosing deep-rooted perennials and reducing thirsty lawn areas.

Replace lawn with drought-tolerant groundcovers and plantings. Traditional turf grass is the thirstiest element in any NB landscape. Replacing even 30–50% of lawn with native groundcovers like wild strawberry, bearberry, creeping juniper, or native sedges eliminates watering, mowing, and fertilizing in those areas. In sunny, well-drained locations, plant sedum, catmint, Russian sage, blanket flower, and ornamental grasses — all of which thrive in NB's climate without supplemental watering once established.

Use mulch and soil improvement instead of gravel. In true xeriscaping, gravel mulch is common — but in NB's humid climate, gravel beds collect organic debris, stay damp, and become weed nurseries. Instead, use **3 inches of bark mulch** in garden beds, which suppresses weeds, retains moisture during dry spells, and breaks down to improve NB's acidic soil over time. Amend heavy clay soils (common around Fredericton) with compost to improve drainage and root penetration — this reduces the need for watering far more effectively than surface treatments.

What doesn't work from traditional xeriscaping in NB. Cacti, succulents (except cold-hardy sedum), and most Mediterranean herbs won't survive NB winters. Gravel-dominant landscapes look alien in the Maritime setting and create maintenance problems. Drip irrigation systems, while excellent in dry climates, are less necessary in NB — rain usually provides adequate moisture, and the freeze-thaw cycle damages in-ground irrigation components. If you do install irrigation, use it only for establishing new plantings during the first season.

The practical NB approach is sometimes called "right-plant-right-place" landscaping. Choose plants adapted to your specific conditions — sun exposure, soil type, drainage — and they'll thrive on natural rainfall alone. A water-efficient NB landscape costs **$500 to $3,000 to establish** depending on size and plant choices, and saves $200–500 annually in reduced lawn care, watering, and maintenance costs. The result looks lush and natural — perfectly suited to New Brunswick's green Maritime character — while requiring a fraction of the input of a conventional lawn-dominated landscape.

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Q6

How do I start composting yard waste in New Brunswick?

Starting a yard waste composting system in New Brunswick is straightforward and produces valuable soil amendment for NB's acidic, often nutrient-poor soils — turning fallen leaves, grass clippings, garden trimmings,

and kitchen scraps into rich compost that improves soil structure, adds nutrients, and reduces the volume of waste heading to municipal landfills. NB's Maritime climate actually helps composting by providing consistent moisture.

Choose your composting method based on your space and volume. A simple **three-bin system** made from wooden pallets or wire mesh is the most efficient for NB yards that generate significant leaf and garden waste. Each bin is approximately 3x3x3 feet: one for fresh material, one for actively composting material, and one for finished compost. This system processes yard waste fastest because you can turn material between bins. For smaller yards, a single **enclosed tumbler composter** ($100–$300) works well — it keeps wildlife out (important in NB where bears, raccoons, and skunks are common) and can be rotated easily for aeration.

The formula for successful composting in NB is simple: balance browns and greens. "Browns" are carbon-rich dry materials — fallen leaves (NB produces mountains of maple, birch, and oak leaves every fall), dried garden stalks, straw, and shredded cardboard. "Greens" are nitrogen-rich wet materials — grass clippings, fresh garden trimmings, vegetable scraps, and coffee grounds. Mix roughly **3 parts brown to 1 part green** by volume. NB's abundant fall leaves are composting gold — shred them with a mower and stockpile for year-round use as brown material.

NB's climate affects composting timing. Active composting slows dramatically from November through March as temperatures drop below 0C. A well-insulated pile will continue decomposing slowly through winter, but don't expect the rapid breakdown you see in summer. Start your pile in spring (May) to get one full cycle of hot composting before winter. Material added in fall will break down over winter and be ready by the following June. In summer, NB's warm temperatures (20–28C) and consistent humidity create ideal composting conditions — a properly managed pile can produce finished compost in **8 to 12 weeks** during June through September.

Maintain moisture and aeration. The pile should feel like a wrung-out sponge — moist but not soaking. NB's rainfall usually keeps outdoor piles adequately moist from May through October, though you may need to water during occasional dry July–August stretches. Turn the pile every 2–3 weeks with a garden fork to introduce oxygen, which accelerates decomposition and prevents the anaerobic conditions that cause odour.

What NOT to compost. Avoid meat, dairy, oils, and cooked food — these attract NB's wildlife. Don't compost diseased plant material (common with NB's fungal issues from Maritime humidity) or invasive weeds that have gone to seed. Pet waste should never enter a garden compost pile. A composting setup costs **$50 to $300** depending on the system, and produces compost worth $30–50 per cubic yard — a valuable amendment for NB's characteristically acidic, clay-heavy, or sandy soils.

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Q7

What are the best pollinator-friendly shrubs for New Brunswick?

The best pollinator-friendly shrubs for New Brunswick include native species like serviceberry, winterberry holly, native dogwoods, bayberry, and elderberry — all of which provide nectar, pollen, and fruit for bees, butterflies, and birds while thriving in NB's zone 3b–5b hardiness range and acidic soils. Shrubs offer something that perennials cannot: multi-season food sources and nesting habitat in a permanent woody framework.

Serviceberry (Amelanchier) is arguably NB's most valuable pollinator shrub. It produces abundant white flowers in early May — one of the first major nectar sources after winter when native bees are desperately hungry. The flowers are followed by blueberry-like fruit in June that feeds birds and small mammals. Multiple species grow native in New Brunswick, from the tree-form Amelanchier laevis (15–20 feet) to the shrubby Amelanchier stolonifera (4–6 feet). Hardy to zone 2, it handles any NB location and its fall foliage turns brilliant orange-red.

Pussy willow and native willows are the absolute earliest pollen and nectar sources in NB, blooming in March and April before almost anything else. Native bees, particularly early-emerging bumblebee queens, depend on willows for their first meals. Plant a native pussy willow (Salix discolor) in a moist area of your yard — it tolerates wet feet that most shrubs cannot handle. It's hardy to zone 2 and grows 10–15 feet tall if unpruned, or can be coppiced annually for the classic silver catkins on straight stems.

Winterberry holly (Ilex verticillata) is a native NB deciduous holly that produces small white flowers in June (important for pollinators) and stunning red berries from October through February that feed overwintering birds. You need both male and female plants for berry production — one male pollinates up to 5 females. Winterberry thrives in NB's wet, acidic soils and tolerates both full sun and part shade. Hardy to zone 3, it's one of the showiest winter-interest shrubs available for Maritime gardens.

Native dogwoods serve pollinators throughout the season. **Red osier dogwood (Cornus sericea)** produces white flower clusters in June that attract native bees, followed by white berries that feed birds in fall. Its crimson winter stems provide year-round garden structure. **Alternate-leaf dogwood (Cornus alternifolia)** has a layered, horizontal branching pattern and produces blue-black fruit loved by thrushes and waxwings. Both are hardy to zone 2 and native throughout New Brunswick.

Elderberry (Sambucus canadensis) produces massive flat-topped flower clusters in June and July that are magnets for pollinators — and can be harvested for elderflower syrup. Dark purple berries follow in August and September, providing food for birds and material for elderberry preserves. Hardy to zone 3, elderberry grows vigorously in NB's moist, fertile soils and can reach 8–12 feet tall.

Plant pollinator shrubs in **groups of 3–5 of the same species** for maximum pollinator efficiency. A diverse pollinator shrub planting for a NB yard costs **$200 to $800** for 5–10 shrubs and creates permanent habitat that improves each year as plants mature and expand.

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Q8

How can I reduce chemical lawn treatments in New Brunswick?

Reducing chemical lawn treatments in New Brunswick starts with building healthy soil that supports strong grass naturally — a thick, well-fed lawn resists weeds, pests, and disease without the synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides that many NB homeowners default to. New Brunswick's cosmetic pesticide regulations already restrict many chemical products, making natural lawn care both the legal and practical choice.

Test your soil first. Most NB lawns sit on acidic soil (pH 4.5–6.0), and grass prefers pH 6.0–7.0. A soil test through the NB Department of Agriculture (under $30) tells you exactly what your lawn needs. In most cases, **applying garden lime to raise pH** is the single most impactful thing you can do — it makes existing soil nutrients available to grass and creates conditions where turf outcompetes many weeds. Apply 40–50 pounds of dolomitic lime per 1,000 square feet in fall, and retest in spring to track progress.

Replace synthetic fertilizer with organic alternatives. Corn gluten meal ($30–50 per 1,000 square feet) is a natural pre-emergent that prevents weed seeds from germinating while adding nitrogen. Apply in early May before NB's spring weed flush. Compost topdressing — a 1/4-inch layer of finished compost spread over the lawn each fall — feeds soil biology, improves moisture retention, and adds slow-release nutrients. Leave grass clippings on the lawn after mowing (grasscycling) — they decompose quickly and return nitrogen equivalent to one full fertilizer application per season.

Adjust your mowing practices. Set your mower to **3 to 3.5 inches** — the single most effective chemical-free weed prevention strategy. Tall grass shades the soil surface, preventing weed seed germination and retaining moisture. Most NB homeowners mow too short (2 inches or less), which stresses grass, exposes soil to weeds, and increases water demand. Never remove more than one-third of the grass blade in a single mowing. Keep mower blades sharp — ragged cuts from dull blades create entry points for fungal diseases, which are already a challenge in NB's humid Maritime climate.

Overseed annually in early September. NB's best lawn seeding window is September 1–15, when soil is warm, air is cool, and fall rains provide consistent moisture. Overseeding with improved grass varieties fills thin spots before weeds can establish. Choose seed blends formulated for Maritime conditions — typically a mix of Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and fine fescue. Spread 3–4 pounds per 1,000 square feet over the existing lawn after a light raking.

Manage weeds without chemicals. Hand-pull dandelions and broadleaf weeds before they seed — a weekly 15-minute walk through the lawn in May and June prevents most weed problems. Spot-treat persistent weeds with horticultural vinegar (20% acetic acid) on sunny days. Accept that a healthy NB lawn will contain some clover and minor weed species — clover actually fixes nitrogen, stays green during drought, and feeds pollinators. A modest amount of diversity in your lawn is a sign of ecological health, not neglect. Budget **$100 to $300 annually** for organic lawn care products — comparable to or less than a chemical program.

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Q9

What are the best sustainable mulching practices for NB gardens?

The best sustainable mulching practice for New Brunswick gardens is applying 2–3 inches of locally sourced, organic mulch — cedar bark, hemlock bark, or shredded hardwood — in late spring after the soil has warmed, replenishing annually rather than stripping and replacing. Proper mulching conserves moisture through NB's occasional summer dry spells, moderates soil temperature, suppresses weeds, and builds soil health as it decomposes — all critical benefits in the Maritime climate.

Choose the right mulch type for NB conditions. Cedar and hemlock bark mulch are the top choices for New Brunswick because they resist decomposition in NB's wet climate (lasting 2–3 years before significant breakdown), repel insects naturally, and are produced locally throughout the Maritimes. Shredded hardwood bark breaks down faster (1–2 years) but adds more organic matter to NB's often nutrient-poor soils — a good choice for garden beds where soil building is a priority. Pine needle mulch works well for acid-loving plants like blueberries, rhododendrons, and azaleas, and NB forests produce abundant pine needles for free.

Avoid dyed mulches and rubber mulch. Dyed red and black mulches are made from ground-up construction waste and pallets — they may contain treated wood chemicals, and the dye runs off in NB's heavy rainfall, staining walkways and patios. Rubber mulch (made from recycled tires) doesn't decompose, overheats in summer sun, and leaches chemicals into soil over time. Neither product contributes to soil health, which is the fundamental purpose of mulching.

Timing and depth matter in NB's climate. Apply mulch in **late May to early June** after the soil has warmed from NB's long winter. Mulching too early traps cold in the soil, delaying plant emergence and root growth. Spread 2–3 inches deep — thicker mulch causes moisture problems in NB's humid climate, and thinner mulch fails to suppress weeds. The one exception is winter protection mulching, applied in late November after the ground freezes, which insulates perennial roots against freeze-thaw damage.

The critical rule: keep mulch away from plant stems and tree trunks. Leave a **4-inch gap** between mulch and stems or trunks. The "volcano mulching" practice of piling mulch against tree trunks is the most damaging mulching mistake in NB — it traps moisture against bark, promotes fungal diseases (already a challenge in Maritime humidity), attracts rodents that girdle bark under snow cover, and can kill mature trees over 2–3 years. Pull mulch back to create a flat, donut-shaped ring around trees.

Sustainable sourcing keeps costs down. Many NB municipalities offer free or low-cost mulch from their yard waste composting programs. Arborists often give away fresh wood chips for free — while these shouldn't be used directly on garden beds (they temporarily tie up nitrogen as they decompose), they're excellent for pathways and can be aged for 6–12 months before garden use. Fall leaves shredded with a mower make outstanding free mulch for vegetable gardens and perennial beds. A sustainable mulching program for a typical NB property costs **$100 to $400 annually** for purchased mulch, or significantly less if you source municipal compost, arborist chips, and your own shredded leaves.

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Q10

How do I attract butterflies and hummingbirds to a NB garden?

Attracting butterflies and hummingbirds to your New Brunswick garden requires planting a succession of nectar-rich flowers that bloom from late May through September, providing shelter and breeding habitat, and eliminating pesticide use that kills these pollinators and their food sources. NB's Maritime climate and diverse native plant community actually make the province an excellent location for pollinator gardens, with several butterfly and hummingbird species naturally present throughout the growing season.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds are the only breeding hummingbird species in New Brunswick, arriving in mid-to-late May and departing by late September. They are attracted to tubular flowers, particularly in red, orange, and pink tones. The best NB-hardy plants for hummingbirds include **bee balm (Monarda didyma)** — arguably the top hummingbird plant for NB gardens, blooming July through August in Zones 3-5 — along with cardinal flower (Lobelia cardinalis), native columbine (Aquilegia canadensis) which blooms in early June when hummingbirds first arrive, trumpet honeysuckle (Lonicera sempervirens), and garden phlox. Supplementing with a nectar feeder (4 parts water to 1 part white sugar, no red dye) positioned near your garden provides reliable food during rainy periods when flowers produce less nectar.

New Brunswick supports dozens of butterfly species, including Monarchs (increasingly rare and deserving conservation support), swallowtails, painted ladies, fritillaries, and various skippers. Butterfly gardens need both **nectar plants** for adult feeding and **host plants** for caterpillar development — without host plants, butterflies cannot complete their life cycle in your garden. Common milkweed (Asclepias syriaca) is the essential Monarch host plant and grows well in NB's Zones 4-5, while violets host fritillary caterpillars, and parsley, dill, and fennel serve as swallowtail host plants.

Design your NB butterfly and hummingbird garden with succession blooming so something is always in flower from late May through September. A proven sequence for NB includes columbine and lilac (May-June), bee balm, butterfly weed, and coneflower (July-August), and asters and goldenrod (September). Plant in large groups of the same species — clusters of 5-7 plants are far more attractive to pollinators than scattered individual plants. Choose a sunny, sheltered location protected from NB's prevailing winds, as both butterflies and hummingbirds prefer calm conditions for feeding.

Include flat stones in sunny spots where butterflies can bask and warm their wings, a shallow dish of damp sand or mud for mineral puddling (butterflies extract essential minerals from damp soil), and shrubby areas for shelter during NB's frequent rain and wind. Avoid hybrid flowers with double blooms or heavily modified flowers — these often produce little nectar compared to species-type plants.

The most important rule is eliminating pesticide use in and around your pollinator garden. Even NB-compliant products like insecticidal soaps and neem oil will kill butterfly caterpillars and can deter hummingbirds. Accept some insect damage as part of a healthy ecosystem. A garden buzzing with caterpillars, bees, and other insects is a garden that will attract butterflies and hummingbirds reliably year after year.

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Q11

What native New Brunswick wildflowers work in a meadow garden?

Native New Brunswick wildflowers create stunning, low-maintenance meadow gardens that support local pollinators, require no irrigation once established, and thrive in the province's acidic soils and Maritime climate without fertilizers or pesticides. A well-designed NB wildflower meadow can replace high-maintenance lawn with a self-sustaining ecosystem that blooms from May through October, providing habitat for butterflies, native bees, and birds.

Foundation species for a NB meadow garden should include plants native to the Acadian Forest region that are proven to naturalize in the province's Zone 3b-5b range. **Black-eyed Susan (Rudbera hirta)** is perhaps the most reliable NB wildflower — it tolerates a wide range of soils from sandy coastal to clay river valley, blooms prolifically from July through September, and self-seeds readily. **New England aster (Symphyotrichum novae-angliae)** provides essential late-season colour from August through October when other flowers are fading, and its purple blooms are magnets for migrating Monarch butterflies passing through NB in September.

Other excellent native species for NB meadows include common milkweed (Asclepias syriaca) — critical Monarch habitat that produces fragrant pink flower clusters in July, wild bergamot (Monarda fistulosa) which attracts hummingbirds and butterflies throughout summer, native goldenrod (Solidago spp.) which contrary to popular belief

does not cause hay fever and provides vital late-season nectar, wild lupine (Lupinus perennis) which thrives in NB's acidic sandy soils, native columbine (Aquilegia canadensis) for early spring blooms, and Joe-Pye weed (Eutrochium maculatum) which towers 4-6 feet tall in moist areas and attracts enormous numbers of pollinators in August.

For NB's wetter areas and clay soils, add blue flag iris (Iris versicolor) — New Brunswick's unofficial wetland wildflower — cardinal flower (Lobelia cardinalis) with its brilliant red spikes, and boneset (Eupatorium perfoliatum). For drier, sandy sites common near the coast, consider wild strawberry (Fragaria virginiana), common yarrow (Achillea millefolium), and pearly everlasting (Anaphalis margaritacea), all of which tolerate NB's acidic, nutrient-poor coastal soils.

Establishing a NB wildflower meadow requires patience and proper site preparation. The biggest mistake is scattering seed onto existing lawn and hoping for the best — grass will outcompete wildflower seedlings every time. Instead, kill the existing vegetation by covering with black plastic for a full growing season (solarization) or by repeated shallow tilling and raking over 2-3 months. Sow seed in late fall (November) so seeds experience natural cold stratification over NB's winter, which many native species require for germination. Alternatively, sow in early spring (late April) after cold-stratifying seeds in your refrigerator for 6-8 weeks.

Expect your meadow to look weedy in its first year — this is normal. Most NB native wildflowers are perennials that spend their first season developing root systems. By the second growing season you will see significant blooming, and by year three the meadow should be fully established. Mow once annually in late fall (November) or early spring (April) to a height of 6 inches to prevent woody plant encroachment while allowing wildflower self-seeding.

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Q12

Can I create a food forest in New Brunswick's climate?

Yes, you can create a productive food forest in New Brunswick, though success requires careful species selection based on your specific hardiness zone and a realistic understanding that NB's shorter growing season (120-150 days) and cold winters limit you to cold-hardy species rather than the tropical and subtropical abundance shown in many food forest guides. Despite these limitations, NB's reliable rainfall (1,100-1,200mm annually), rich organic soils, and long summer daylight hours support a surprisingly diverse range of edible perennial plants.

A food forest mimics the layered structure of a natural forest with **seven layers of productive plants**: tall canopy trees, smaller understory trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants, ground covers, vines, and root crops. In New Brunswick, your **canopy layer** options include apple trees (many heritage varieties are hardy to Zone 3), pear trees (Ure and Early Gold for Zone 4), black walnut (southern NB only, Zone 5), and sugar maple for syrup production. Hardy **understory trees** include serviceberry (Amelanchier) — a native NB species producing delicious berries in July — plus plum (Mount Royal and Brookgold for Zone 4), cherry (Evans and Juliet sour cherries for Zone 3-4), and hazelnut (beaked hazelnut is native to NB).

The **shrub layer** is where NB food forests really excel because many productive berry species are perfectly adapted to the province's acidic soils and Maritime climate. **Highbush blueberries** (NB's acidic pH 4.5-6.0 soils are naturally ideal), **currants** (red, black, and white — all hardy to Zone 3), **gooseberries**, **elderberries**, **honeyberries** (also called haskap — extremely cold-hardy to Zone 2 and increasingly popular in NB), and **raspberry and blackberry** varieties all thrive with minimal care once established. Lingonberries make an excellent productive ground cover for NB's acidic soils.

Herbaceous and ground cover layers can include rhubarb (virtually indestructible in NB), comfrey (excellent nutrient accumulator and mulch plant), wild strawberry, lovage, chives, horseradish, Jerusalem artichoke, and various mints. For the **vine layer**, hardy kiwi (Actinidia arguta, Zone 4) produces small grape-sized fruits and is increasingly grown in southern NB, while native grapes (Vitis riparia) are fully hardy throughout the province.

Site selection in NB should prioritize a south-facing slope if available, which provides extra warmth and extends your growing season by 1-2 weeks — significant in a province where every frost-free day counts. Windbreaks of spruce or cedar on the north and northwest sides protect tender species from NB's cold winter winds. Most NB food forests perform best in Zones 4b-5b (Fredericton south, Moncton, Saint John corridor), though Zone 3b gardeners in northern NB can still create productive systems using the hardiest species.

Start small — a 20x30 foot area is a manageable first phase — and expand over 3-5 years as you learn what thrives on your specific NB property. Plant your canopy trees first and fill in lower layers as the trees grow. A food forest takes 5-8 years to reach meaningful productivity but then produces food for decades with minimal input beyond annual pruning and mulching.

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Q13

What are the best low-water landscaping options for NB properties?

While New Brunswick receives ample annual rainfall (1,100-1,200mm), low-water landscaping is still a smart strategy for NB properties — it reduces dependence on supplemental irrigation during July-August dry spells, lowers maintenance time, and creates resilient landscapes that thrive even during the periodic droughts that NB experiences. Properties on private wells, sandy coastal soils that drain quickly, and south-facing slopes where evaporation is highest benefit most from drought-conscious design.

Native NB plants are the foundation of any low-water landscape because they have evolved over thousands of years to thrive in the province's natural rainfall patterns without supplemental irrigation. Excellent drought-tolerant native shrubs include bayberry (Myrica pensylvanica) — a beautiful coastal native hardy to Zone 4 that tolerates salt spray and sandy soil — along with sumac (Rhus typhina) for dramatic fall colour, sweet fern (Comptonia peregrina) which thrives in NB's poorest sandy soils, and native roses (Rosa blanda, Rosa carolina) that provide flowers, fragrance, and rose hips without the watering demands of hybrid tea roses.

For perennial beds, select species with deep root systems or drought adaptations. Black-eyed Susan, coneflower (Echinacea purpurea — hardy to Zone 3-4), catmint (Nepeta — extremely drought-tolerant once established), sedums (stonecrop varieties are virtually indestructible in NB conditions), Russian sage (Zone 4-5), ornamental grasses like switchgrass (Panicum virgatum, a native NB species) and little bluestem, yarrow, and lavender (Hidcote and Munstead varieties for Zone 5 coastal NB) all thrive with minimal supplemental water after their first establishment year.

Reduce your total lawn area — traditional Kentucky Bluegrass lawns are the thirstiest element in most NB landscapes, requiring 1 inch of water per week to stay green. Consider replacing portions of lawn with **fine fescue mixes** (creeping red fescue, chewings fescue, sheep fescue), which are naturally drought-tolerant, grow well in NB's acidic soils, and can survive extended dry periods without irrigation by going semi-dormant. A fine fescue lawn mowed at 3-4 inches requires 50-70% less water than a bluegrass lawn and can be left unmowed for a naturalized meadow effect in lower-traffic areas.

Mulching is the simplest and most effective water-conservation technique for NB landscapes. A 3-4 inch layer of shredded bark or wood chip mulch around trees, shrubs, and perennial beds reduces soil moisture evaporation by 50-70%, moderates soil temperature during NB's summer heat, and suppresses weeds that compete for moisture. NB arborist wood chips are often available free or at low cost from local tree services.

Design strategies that reduce water needs include grouping plants by water needs (hydrozoning) so thirsty plants are together near water sources while drought-tolerant species are in drier areas, using permeable

hardscaping (gravel paths, permeable pavers) instead of lawn in areas that receive heavy foot traffic, and capturing roof runoff with rain barrels ($100-300 for a complete setup) to irrigate during dry periods. For NB properties with sandy soil, incorporating organic matter through annual compost applications improves water-holding capacity dramatically — sandy soil amended with compost can hold 2-3 times more moisture than unamended sand.

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