



## TOP 40 NATIVE ALTERNATIVES TO SEDUM FOR MIDWESTERN GREEN ROOFS

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*Looking for green roof plants that will protect your building, attract wildlife, soak up stormwater and look beautiful? Here are some of our favorites to put on your list today!*

So you want a green roof, and you love the idea of natives. Yet after hours of fruitless searching for sedum that evolved in the Midwest, you have come up with exactly ... one option.

Sorry, friend. That's because there is only one sedum native to our area. (But it's a pretty great one! See below.)

Many people throw up their hands right here, assuming that they have to therefore accept non-native alternatives on their rooftops. But that's not the case at all. In fact, there are plenty of choices for native green roof plants. Here are 40 of our favorite to peruse today.

# 1. ANEMONE (CANADA ANEMONE), ANEMONE CANADENSIS

A thickly growing plant, the Canada anemone is our favorite choice for this flower. It has delicate white blooms reminiscent of a strawberry, spreads by rhizomes and quickly becomes a mat of hardy greenery.



*Canada anemone*

# 2. ANISE HYSSOP, AGASTACHE FOENICULUM

Anise hyssop, *Agastache foeniculum*. This tall, spiky-flowered member of the mint family was an herbal and culinary go-to for many throughout history. Today, we love it for the green roof, where it provides visual interest and a pollinator paradise during summer and fall.



*Anise hyssop*

# 3. ARROWLEAF VIOLET, VIOLA SAGITTATE

Native to Eastern North America, this vibrant violet-colored member of that eponymous family is another green roof star. Widespread in the Central and Eastern United States, it is used to depleted soil and dry conditions, so it will thrive even on hot, demanding rooftops.

# 4. ASHY SUNFLOWER, HELIANTHUS MOLLIS

This sunflower species looks almost like a gerbera daisy, but brings its native pollinator appeal right to your green roof or garden. It is widespread in the Great Lakes region, meaning lots of the birds and bees here have evolved to eat it. Be a good citizen and plant some!



*Ashy sunflower*

# 5. BIG BLUESTEM, ANDROPOGON GERARDII

Also known as turkeyfoot, tall bluestem and bluejoint, this delightfully named grass is native to the plains as well as much of the Eastern and Central United States. Named for its blue-green stems, which can grow up to 8 feet tall, it turns a deep tan in fall, providing seasonal color until the following spring.

## 6. BLUE-STEMMED GOLDENROD, SOLIDAGO CAESIA

Another blue-stemmed favorite of ours, this species offers showstopping contrast. It has a tall stalk that weathers to a blue-grey with age, plus golden flowers from late summer to fall and deep green leaves. We guarantee you won't know where to look first.

## 7. COLUMBINE, AQUILEGIA CANADENSIS

With its gently nodding head and bell-shaped flower, columbine is an easy native to keep happy. It grows merrily in rocky ground, making it a great choice for demanding rooftop environments. Yellow and red flowers cheer up the summer months and give the bees, flies, beetles and butterflies an early meal each spring.

## 8. COMMON WOOD SEDGE, CAREX BLANDA

With bright green, bunch-forming grass blades and interesting geometric flower stalks, common wood sedge adds visual fascination to any green roof. This is a perfect specimen for rounding out garden beds on rooftops trafficked by humans, while providing excellent cover to bugs and critters.

## 9. CREAM WILD INDIGO, BAPTISIA BRACTEATE

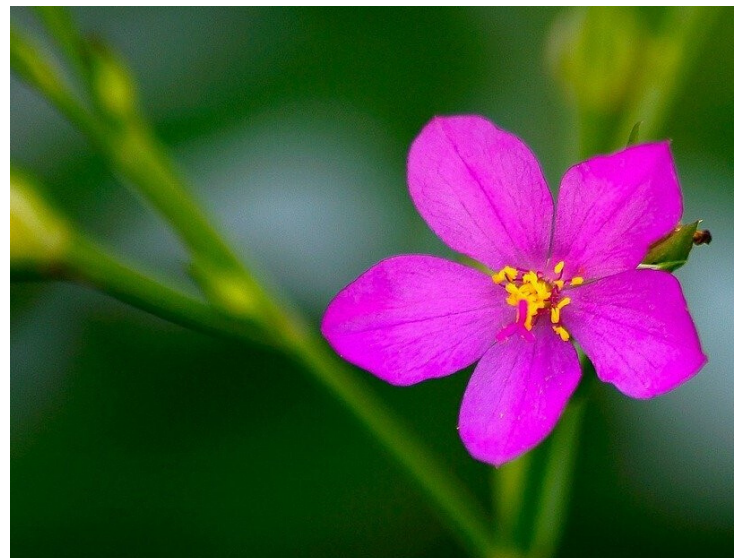
This prairie perennial is an excellent choice for green roofs that take the garden approach. Standing about a foot and a half tall, it has showy cream to yellow flowers in May and June, reminiscent of wisteria's clustering floral waterfalls. Seed pods turn black in fall, matched by leaves after a frost, offering fall and winter interest.

## 10. CURLY-STYLED WOOD SEDGE, CAREX ROSEA

A hardy and tolerant plant, this sedge is ideal for dry or shaded areas. It loves cooler temperatures and fills out during the spring and fall, when moist air and temperate weather predominates. Like its common cousin, it offers great cover to animals.

## 11. FAMEFLOWER, PHEMERANTHUS CALYCINUS

If you're a magenta fan, fameflower is for you. This attractive native, also called rock pink, is native to the Midwest and grows well in rocky soil – again, perfectly adapted to green roof media. They bloom all summer, reseed readily and tolerate drought well.



*Fameflower*

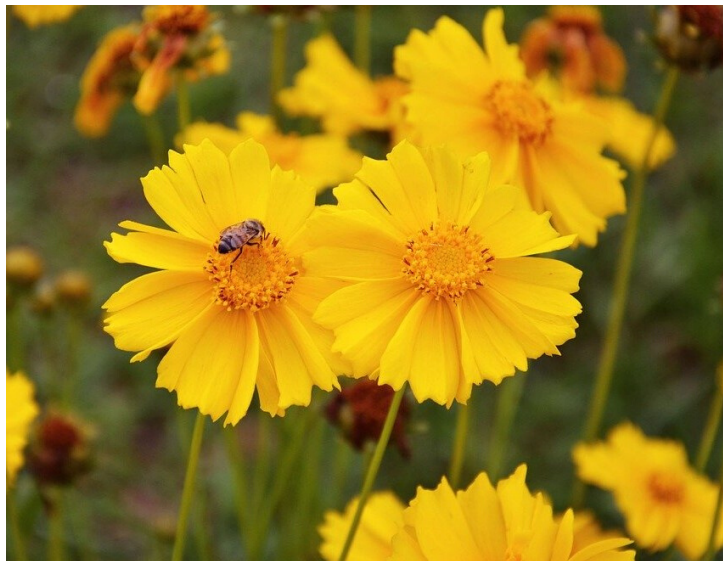
## 12. FLOWERING SPURGE, EUPHORBIA COROLLATA

With long stems, branched at the top where small white flowers sit, this delicate species is a good option for more cultivated plant groupings and prairie-like green roof environments alike. It attracts a wide variety of pollinators, including friendly native wasps. Don't be afraid! They come in peace.

## 13. FOXGLOVE BEARDTONGUE,

### PENSTEMON DIGITALIS

Foxglove, traditionally beloved of English gardens, can also make its mark on rooftops. It is hardy, can deal with a wide range of light conditions, handles dry soil well, and doesn't need a lot of TLC once established. Native to the Midwestern and Eastern U.S., it puts on long-throated white flowers in summer.



*Lanceleaf coreopsis*

## 14. LANCELEAF COREOPSIS,

### COREOPSIS LANCEOLATE

This blooming perennial showcases yellow flowers and yellow centers with lush, fluffy green foliage. Also known as lance-leaf tickseed, plants are arranged in small clumps – but can quickly fill out wide swaths of ground if left to naturalize.

## 15. LEAD PLANT, AMORPHA

### CANESCENS

Another specimen with lots of creative names, lead plant also goes by the monikers downy indigo bush, prairie shoestring and buffalo bellows. This pea family member is a flowering perennial shrub that forms finger-like racemes of flowers in July through September.

## 16. LITTLE BLUESTEM,

### SCHIZACHYRIUM SCOPARIUM

Most commonly found in Midwestern prairies, little bluestem – also known as beard grass – is native to all of the continental United States except a few Western ones. Reaching 2-3 feet tall, this ornamental grass grows in blue-green clumps and turns a pale golden white in the winter. Bugs and critters love to use its cover over the cold months, so don't chop it down until spring!

## 17. MARSH BLAZING STAR, LIATRIS

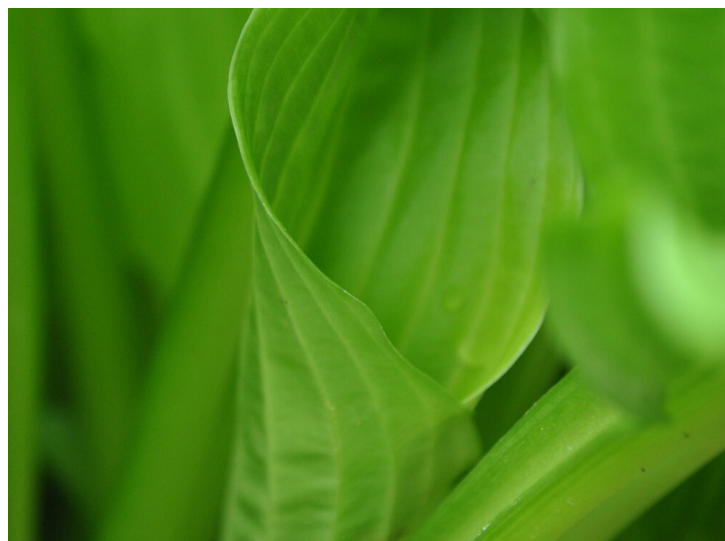
### SPICATA

With green foliage, dark lavender flowers and a purple-green stem, marsh blazing star (or dense blazing star or prairie gay feather) is a great choice for green roofs with a prairie aesthetic. It grows happily even in difficult environments, given that it can be found in much of the United States.

## 18. NARROW-LEAVED HOSTA,

### HOSTA LANCIFOLIA

Growing about a foot tall and spread 18 inches wide, this herbaceous perennial has the traditional round, hosta look with narrower-than-usual leaves. It works well in shaded spots, tolerates the cold well, and comes back year after year. Expect purple blooms in midsummer to fall.



*Narrow-leaved hosta*

## 19. NODDING WILD ONION, ALLIUM

### CERNUUM

In a break with onion tradition, nodding wild onion has drooped rather than round flower heads. The cheerful pinkish-white blooms come on in summer and offer plenty of pollinator delight, especially butterflies. This is a perfect choice for a rooftop garden people will visit. It propagates easily from seed or from dividing bulbs in the fall, so it's also a cost-effective specimen.



*Ohio Spiderwort*

## 20. OHIO SPIDERWORT, TRADESCANTIA OHIENSIS

With deep blue to purple flowers and grassy-looking leaves, Ohio spiderwort is a cheerful native for rooftops. It not only attracts beneficial insects, it provides perennial cover, upping a roof's stormwater management capacity and providing that winter green appeal.

## 21. PALM SEDGE, CAREX MUSKINGUMENSIS

Palm sedge grows in tall stalks with grassy leaves in a clump formation. It looks somewhat like a palm, hence the name. Providing the perfect backdrop to showier plants, it grows happily in a shallow media or soil profile.



*Pasture rose*

## 22. PASTURE ROSE, ROSA CAROLINA

Nothing can beat a rose for year-round visual interest. The characteristic pink wild-rose bloom comes on in late spring to early summer, fading by the end of the summer to be replaced with bright rose hips. This shrub is native to Eastern North America, and it does well even in harsh conditions.

## 23. PRAIRIE ALUMROOT, HEUCHERA RICHARDSONII

This prairie specimen grows in low clumps of evergreen leaves, which are ruffled and close together. A visually pleasing plant, it puts on tall stalks of light green to cream-colored flowers from late spring to midsummer. If you look closely, you'll see a striking bright orange stamen.



*Prairie alumroot*

## 24. PRAIRIE COREOPSIS, COREOPSIS

### PALMATA

Tolerant of many types of soil and growing conditions, prairie coreopsis grows to about two feet tall and produces round, daisy-like yellow flowers for up to a month in summer. It is also known as prairie tickseed, and grows by rhizome. Once established, it spreads readily, providing great erosion control and stormwater services.



*Prairie smoke*

## 25. PRAIRIE SMOKE, GEUM

### TRIFLORUM

Don't worry, nothing's on fire – but with fluffy flowers that look like trapped smoke, prairie smoke is sure to catch your eye. It's pinky-grey aging flower heads do indeed look like smoke in the fruiting stage, which follows a spring to early summer bloom. It is tolerant of a wide range of growing conditions, ideal for either a green roof or a rooftop garden.

## 26. PURPLE PRAIRIE CLOVER,

### DALEA PURPUREA

You might remember popping the heads off this distinctive clover when you were a kid. With tall, cylindrical flowers, these are distinct from the round, bushy flower heads of other clover species. A native wildflower, it is super attractive to the native bee, fly and other pollinator species – so do your part for Illinois' flying friends and plant this one!

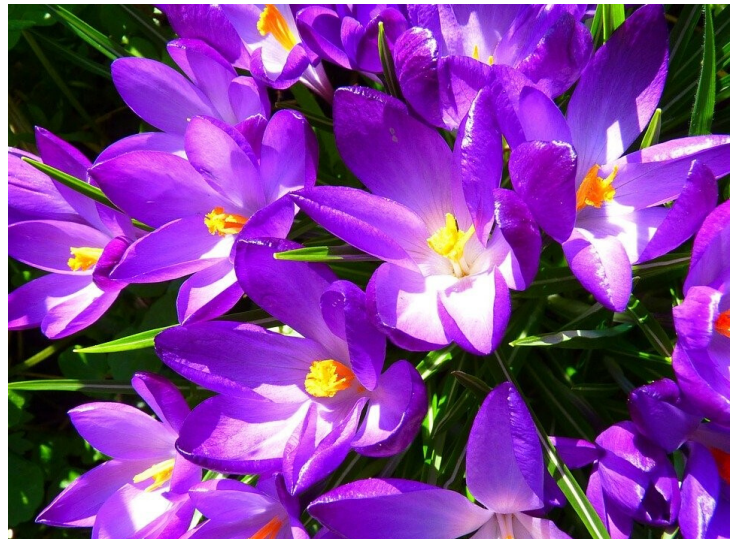


*Purple prairie clover*

## 27. PURPLISH PINK TOMMIES,

### CROCUS TOMMASINIANUS

If this distinctive name fooled you into thinking it's a radical new native of which you've never heard, think again. It's really just a crocus with pinky-purple blooms. One of the first to come up in the spring, it often signals the end of winter's harshest weather, offering viewers a sigh of relief.



*Purplish pink tommies*

## 28. PUSSYTOES, ANTENNARIA

### PLANTAGINIFOLIA

Once you see this plant, you won't wonder where it got its name. With adorable toe beans that pop up in white clusters come spring and early summer, it offers great groundcover. Add in soft leaves that spread at ground level through rhizomes, and you've got a winner.

## 29. SILKY ASTER,

### SYMPHYOTRICHUM SERICEUM

Silky aster is not to be confused with its close cousin, smooth aster, discussed below. This Central North American native grows with a tall, sprawling habit, branching into the air and along the ground. The daisy-like flowers are about an inch across and rose-purple in color. A perennial, it is low-maintenance and great at managing wet weather.

## 30. SMOOTH BLUE ASTER,

### SYMPHYOTRICHUM

#### LEAVE

Although it looks similar to the silky aster, smooth blue aster has flowers with decidedly thinner and more profuse petals. It also grows in airier fashion, with tall stems that branch at the top. Just like its mate above, however, it's a perennial that does well on green roofs and excels at sucking up water.



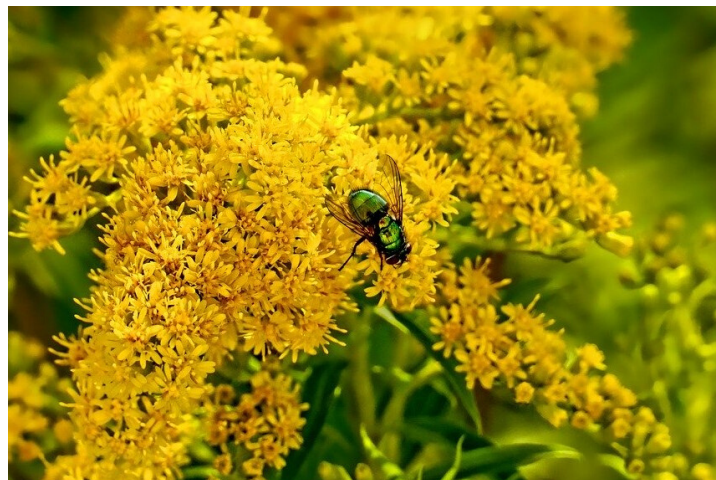
*Smooth blue aster*

## 31. STIFF GOLDENROD, SOLIDAGO

### RIGIDA

A more distant cousin to the asters above, it is nevertheless a member of their family. Also called just stiff goldenrod, this plant has a lot of structure – as the name implies.

It is quite common east of the Rocky Mountains, where it grows in a range of soil and water conditions. With gray-green leaves and bright yellow flower heads made up of bloom clusters, it provides a lot of visual interest.



*Stiff goldenrod*

## 32. TALL CINQUEFOIL, POTENTILLA

### ARGUTA

With bright green foliage growing low to the ground and tall stems that hold flower clusters, prairie cinquefoil or tall cinquefoil is a common perennial in the Midwest. It blooms for four months out of the year, making it an excellent plant for anyone who wants to attract critters to their green roof.

## 33. WESTERN INDIAN PHYSIC,

### PORTERANTHUS STIPULATUS

An upright bushy perennial, Western Indian physic – also Bowman's root – is an extremely amenable plant. It can be grown in partial shade to full sun, dry or wet conditions, and rich or average soil. It boasts impressive seasonal variation, with white star-shaped flowers in June, red seed pods in summer, and yellow to crimson foliage in fall. Can we just say: Yes, please?

## 34. WHITE PRAIRIE CLOVER, DALEA

### CANDIDA

Remember purple prairie clover? This is pretty much the same beast, but with fluffier white flowers instead.

Its habitat ranges from Central Canada and the United States all the way down into Northern Mexico, making it suited for a wide range of green roof environments, from hot and dry to cool and wet.

### 35. WHITE WILD INDIGO, BAPTISIA ALBA

Like its relative the cream wild indigo, the white version has the same pea-like flower clusters, though they're a bit more spread out on the stem. When not flowering, it is low-growing plant. It provides great ground cover with seasonal service as a pollinator attraction.



*Whorled milkweed*

### 36. WHORLED MILKWEED, ASCLEPIAS VERTICILLATE

You probably already know that milkweed is a fan favorite of the Monarch butterfly. This keystone species needs our help, which is the only excuse you should need to plant whorled milkweed on your green roof. If you need a few more, consider the fact that it blooms prettily in July through September, and its bloom time is later than all other milkweeds – making it even more important.

### 37. WILD BERGAMOT, MONARDA FISTULOSA

With bright green foliage growing low to the ground and tall stems that hold flower clusters, prairie cinquefoil or tall cinquefoil is a common

perennial in the Midwest. It blooms for four months out of the year, making it an excellent plant for anyone who wants to attract critters to their green roof.

### 38. WILD PETUNIA, RUELLIA HUMILIS

The wild petunia looks much like the true petunia, which is native to South America. This local alternative is a better option for the plants and animals, and knows how to manage weather in Chicago and surrounding areas/states. It has pretty green foliage and purple blooms that grow atop stems in summer.

### 39. WILD QUININE, PARTHENIUM INTEGRIFOLIUM

Also known as American feverfew and eastern feverfew, wild quinine is native to Eastern North America and much of the Midwest, from Wisconsin down to Arkansas. It grows 3 to 5 feet high, with medium green leaves and white flowers. It keeps its structure well, holding up to the elements even in harsh conditions.



*Wild stonecrop*

### 40. WILD STONECROP, SEDUM TERNATUM

Also known as woodland stonecrop, this is that one native sedum we promised you. At least it's a good one! Pretty, with rosettes of succulent leaves, it puts on a severely enthusiastic flower display in spring. Like, really ... it's a lot of flowers. If you're looking for a plant that will grab stormwater, hold media in place and rock that spring show, this is it.





Ready to get started planting your green roof? Get in touch with us today!

ecogardens

GET IN TOUCH TODAY!

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