

Interesting research projects on perennials in The Netherlands

Native versus non-native (perennial) species

In recent years "native versus non-native species" is a hot topic in horticulture and landscaping. What should be used in our urban and rural areas: native or non-native (exotic) species or maybe even autochthonous plants? Especially in the past two decades, the planting of native species and autochthonous provenances has been strongly propagated especially by nature conservationists and ecologists. Much-quoted arguments for the use of native species are the wish to maintain our genetic heritage and the fact that native species have proven to be well adapted to the local climate.

However, there are also opposite opinions. Some progressive ecologists strongly question the protection of the indigenous nature and the preference for native species. Our natural environment is changing very fast due to climate change, eutrophication and urbanization. This means that the concepts of native and exotic species lose their meaning quickly. According to these ecologists we should accept that nature changes and deal with it practically. For application of species in our urban environment also additional influences are important. The climate in urban areas differs significantly from the climate of the countryside. In addition, the ecosystem services of urban green have become increasingly important. Also the valuable deep-rooted garden culture plays an important role in choosing plantings and species.

It is a challenge to find a good balance between our valuable nature with beautiful native species and our valuable (green) culture with a great diversity of beautiful functional non-native species. Also derivatives, such as cultivars and autochthonous provenances have great value. To make the right choice, the location in combination with the goals of that planting are essential. Therefore, the criterion "native or non-native" is not of primary importance concerning decisions on plant species for most (urban) plantings.

For the Dutch Nursery industry the Applied Plant Research of Wageningen UR has written a practical brochure on this topic. This in order help nurserymen, perennial plant growers and landscapers to make their decisions for using native or non-native plant species.

Literature for more information (in Dutch):

M.H.A Hoffman (2011): *Inheemse en uitheemse soorten en stad en landschap* – Brochure edited by Plant Publicity Holland, 33 p.. Online available at: <http://edepot.wur.nl/179511>.



Many non-native perennial species, like this *Nepeta racemosa* and *Miscanthus sinensis*, grow very well in our gardens and cities

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