



# BWSR Featured Plant

**Name: Meadowsweet (*Spiraea alba*)**

**Plant Family: Rose**



*Flowers boom in mid-summer and are arranged in a dense cluster.*

An attractive low growing shrub, meadowsweet occurs in a wide range of wetland habitats. The flowers provide nectar and pollen for native bees and butterflies. Its leaves, flower buds and seeds are a food source for a variety of wildlife species. In addition to wetland restoration projects this species is used in riparian buffer plantings and stormwater projects, as it can handle temporary inundation and other disturbances. Dense clusters or thickets of meadowsweet can be found in some disturbed areas.

Statewide Wetland

Indicator Status:

Facultative Wetland - FACW



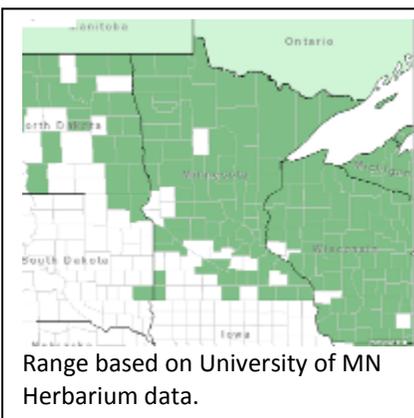
*grows around five feet tall*

## Identification

Meadowsweet can have multiple woody stems that grow to around five feet tall in the wild. It can grow up to eight feet tall when it has little competitions, so it may not be suited for smaller gardens. Young twigs tend to be green while older twigs are reddish brown, smooth and woody. Its smooth, alternate leaves are linear in shape and come to a point (similar to Canada goldenrod) with small teeth along the edges. Its flowers are grouped into spike-like panicles up to six inches long. Individual flowers are ¼ inch wide and have five petals. They bloom in mid-summer for one to two months.

## Range

This species is found across Minnesota with the exception of some counties in the southwest corner. It prefers moist soils with high organic content but can also grow in mesic soils conditions. It is commonly found in wet prairies, wet meadows, shrub wetlands, streambanks, marsh edges and bogs.



*Reddish-brown bark and linear leaves with sharp serrations*

## Uses

With abundant nectar and pollen, meadowsweet attracts a wide range of insects including butterflies, bumblebees, wasps and long and short-tongued native bees. Its seeds are eaten by songbirds and its foliage provides a food source for caterpillars of several butterflies and moths. It is a host plant for the larvae of the spring azure butterfly. Since meadowsweet can handle disturbed conditions, it can successfully establish along shorelines and in stormwater plantings where there may be disturbances such as waves, inundation or weed competition.

### Primary Uses:

- Pollinator/Insect Habitat
- Songbird Habitat
- Soil Stabilization



*Meadowsweet seedling established from seed in a restored wetland*

## Planting Recommendations

Meadowsweet can successfully establish from seed that is planted in the fall to allow for the seeds to break dormancy over the winter. Seeding is most successful in areas with little competition where the seeds have light and sufficient moisture. Plants can also be purchased from nurseries in containers and planted into areas where they will have sufficient soil moisture and sunlight. Meadowsweet should not be transplanted from the wild. In areas where it has been planted, clumps can be separated and transplanted in early spring or late fall when the plant is dormant.

### Planting Methods

- Seed
- Containerized Plants
- Transplanting

## Similar Species



Steeplebush (*Spiraea tomentosa*) looks similar to meadowsweet but has pink flowers and is fuzzy on the stems and under the leaves. It is only found in northeast Minnesota and the Anoka Sandplain, often in high quality wetlands.

## References

Illinois Wildflowers: <http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/wetland/plants/meadowsweet.htm>

Minnesota Wildflowers: <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/white-meadowsweet>