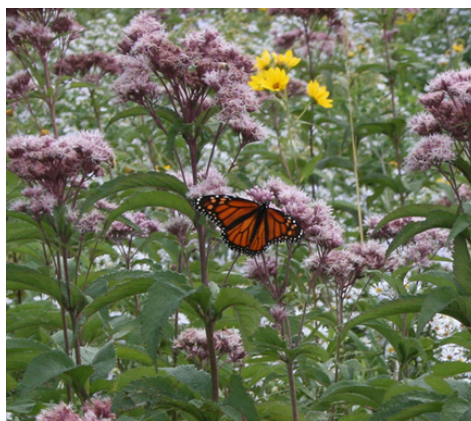


Joe Pye Weed

Joe Pye Weed (JPW) is a family of native North American perennial wildflowers belonging to the genus *Eutrochium*. They produce pink flower clusters on top of their stems from midsummer to early fall. Their seeds are small and are attached to a feathery parachute like structure that allows for them to be easily dispersed by the wind. The stems can range from three to ten feet in height depending on the species.

These native plants grow in part shade to full sun and tolerate a variety of soil types and pH levels. Sometimes if there is too much shade the plants can be a little leggy and need to be staked to keep them upright. Staking may also be necessary if the flower heads become too heavy. They prefer moist but well drained soil and are hardy in zones four to nine. In late fall, JPW will start to die back. Plants can be cut back to between four to eight inches from the ground in late fall or early spring. Leaving them standing until spring allows bees to find shelter in their hollow stems, and birds to use the dead flower heads for nesting material.

There are five species of JPW. Four are common to our area; the fifth (*Eutrochium steelei*) grows in the southern Appalachian mountains. These four species, listed below, all grow in moist soil, and in sun to part shade. Some tolerate a little more shade or dry conditions than others. They are: *Eutrochium dubium* - Coastal Joe Pye Weed; *Eutrochium fistulosum* - Hollow-Stem Joe Pye Weed; *Eutrochium maculatum* - Spotted Joe Pye Weed; *Eutrochium purpureum* - Sweet-Scented Joe Pye Weed



One huge benefit of this plant is that it supports many types of wildlife. As a butterfly magnet, it hosts over three dozen species of butterflies and moths, including swallowtails, spotted skippers, painted ladies, eastern tailed blues, and monarchs. Its flowers are lightly fragrant and attractive to butterflies and other beneficial insects. JPWs are a good alternative to the non-native, invasive but popular butterfly bush. Butterflies can use the nectar from the butterfly bush, but native butterfly caterpillars cannot eat the leaves. Thus, they cannot reproduce on the butterfly bush, while they can on the Joe Pye weeds.

In the midsummer to fall, the plant is also a nectar source for hummingbirds and many types of bees. In addition, many types of songbirds, especially sparrows, eat its seeds. JPW are moderately deer and rabbit resistant. Overall, they are easy to grow, require little maintenance, and can make an attractive native addition to many landscapes.

Credit: Cynthia F., Rutgers Master Gardener of Hunterdon County

