

MDC Says Frost Flowers Can Be Part of Landscaping

Frost flowers appear like magic in woods and fields when winter brings sub-freezing temperatures. But people can make them appear with the right choice of native plants in landscaping designs. The recent cold spell created icy blooms on the stems of white crownbeard, a native wildflower, at the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Anita B. Gorman Discovery Center in Kansas City. In recent years, glassy or milk-white ribbons of ice have appeared reliably on crownbeard with the first deep freeze.

Not all plants will produce frost flowers. But white crownbeard, yellow crownbeard, yellow ironweed and dittany will produce them if soil, moisture and temperature conditions are right. The cold freezes moisture in the stems of these plants, icy ribbons expand out in patterns that depend on how the stem splits and other factors. Perhaps the roots of those plants stay active longer and have more moisture to produce the ribbon-like patterns.

White crownbeard is a tall plant. Most gardeners will want to plant it in the back of native wildflower plots. Dittany is a smaller plant that may fit better in shaded yard plantings. They are bonus plants for gardeners, providing colorful flowers in summer and frost flowers in winter.

Native plants also benefit pollinator species such as butterflies and bees. For information on frost flowers, visit <http://on.mo.gov/2hKVdzS>. Information about using native plants in landscape gardens is available at <http://grownative.org/>.