NATIVE MEADOWSWEET AND STEEPLEBUSH CARE

LIGHT

Native meadowsweet (Spiraea alba var. latifolia) and steeplebush (S. tomentosa) flower best in full sun. Some light shade is tolerated. Give these upright, colony-forming shrubs room in a damp border or naturalistic planting rather than a narrow, dry foundation strip.

WATER

Provide dependable moisture. Water deeply during establishment and keep checking in dry weather; meadowsweet performs poorly in prolonged dryness. A site that is damp in spring but bakes dry in summer may need additional watering. Avoid relying on occasional shallow sprinkling.

SOIL & PLANTING

Choose moisture-retentive soil suited to a wet-meadow planting. Steeplebush prefers acidic, moist to wet soil. Plant at the original nursery level, mulch lightly, and leave the crown exposed. Allow space around each plant to check and control spreading shoots.

FEEDING

Avoid heavy feeding when growth is already healthy. If a soil test or persistent weak growth indicates a need, apply a modest spring dose of shrub fertilizer at the label rate. Check moisture and drainage before assuming that more fertilizer is the answer.

SEASONAL CARE

Prune if needed in late winter or early spring before vigorous new growth. Remove winter-killed or crowded stems and retain healthy shoots for summer flowers. Faded flower clusters can be removed to encourage further bloom, or left if seed and wildlife interest are desired.

HELPFUL TIPS

Meadowsweet has white flower clusters; steeplebush has upright pink flower spikes. Both lose leaves for winter and may expand by suckering. Remove unwanted shoots at the edge of the planting. Their moisture needs differ from drought-tolerant garden spirea cultivars; keep their care separate.