Garden Plants For Supporting Pollinators

What are pollinators and why should we plant for them?

Bees, butterflies, moths, flies, birds, beetles, ants, wasps, and bats are examples of our many important pollinators. A few plants are pollinated by wind, but most depend on pollinators. Over 80% of the world's flowering plants require a pollinator to reproduce, including nearly 75% of all the world's food crops. Pollinators are critical to the survival of our food system.

Communities that have many species interacting and living together are more stable, more productive, and better able to support human life. We need to share the land with other species, including pollinators. The following examples are two members of our community that are in decline and need our help:

1. The monarch butterfly numbers have declined around 80% at the overwintering site in Mexico since the 1990s.
2. The population of North American birds has dropped 30% since 1970. The greatest loss is among small grassland birds, many of the birds we see in our backyards, like hummingbirds.

There are many reasons for the examples above, some we cannot immediately fix. However, there are many simple and enjoyable changes that we can make in our yards that can help make a difference. Here are a few changes we can all make to support local pollinator populations:

- **Use a wide variety of plants that bloom from early spring into late fall.** Creating a garden that has continuous flowers throughout the year is not only aesthetically pleasing but also serves an important function for providing nectar for pollinators. Help pollinators find and use plants by planting in clumps, rather than single plants. Include plants native to our region. Native plants are adapted to our local climate, soils, and our native pollinators. Do not forget that night-blooming flowers will support moths and bats.

- **Include larval host plants in the landscape.** To help attract butterflies, grow plants that butterfly caterpillars can feed on. This will help the butterflies and the birds, as those small caterpillars are an important first food for newly hatched birds. The caterpillars will eat the plants, so place them where unsightly leaf damage can be tolerated. A butterfly guide will help determine the plants to include for specific butterfly species.

- **Provide a water source for pollinators.** A dripping hose on bare soil or containers filled with sand/small rocks and kept moist create ideal locations for butterflies and bees to land on and drink. Mix a small pinch of table salt or wood ashes into the damp sand or mud to provide additional salt & minerals that butterflies need.

- **Avoid modern hybrid flowers, especially those with "doubled" blossoms.** Often plant breeders have unwittingly left the pollen, nectar, and fragrance out of these blossoms while creating the "perfect" blooms for our enjoyment.

- **Leave some branches and garden debris in the garden.** An occasional dead limb provides essential nesting sites for native bees, and an overwintering site for some pollinators. Many pollinators overwinter as larvae or cocoons in woodpiles, decaying branches, fallen leaves, and the dead stalks of perennials. Too much fall cleanup can diminish butterfly populations the following spring. Make sure any dead branches are not a safety hazard. Occasional spots of bare soil are ok, and provide some bees a space to dig tunnels in the soil for their nests.

- **Eliminate pesticides whenever possible.** If using a pesticide is necessary, use the least toxic material possible. Read labels carefully before purchasing, as many pesticides are especially dangerous for bees. Use the product properly. Spray at night or in the early morning when bees and most other pollinators are not active.

- **Learn more about pollinators.** The next page of this document includes a list of plants that can be grown in our area to support pollinators. Some plants are useful nectar sources, other plants are larval food sources for caterpillars, and some plants will be both. Additional information about pollinators can also be found in a variety of publications, electronic resources, and books.

Perennial Plants

Common/Scientific Name	Height	Spread	Bloom Time	🐛	🦋	🐝
Aster (*Aster* spp.) or (*Symphyotrichum* sp.)	1-2'	1-2'	Aug-Oct	X	X	X
Bee Balm (*Monarda* spp.)	2-5'	2-3'	June-Sept		X	X
Blazing Star Liatris (*Liatris spicata*)	2-4'	1-1½'	July-Aug		X	X
Black-Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia* spp.)	2-3'	1-2'	June-Sept	X	X	X
Blue Wild Indigo (*Baptisia australis*)	3-4'	3-4'	May-Jun	X	X	X
Blue Star Amsonia (*Amsonia hubrichtii*)	2-3'	2-3'	Apr-May		X	X
Catmint (Nepeta spp.)	1-3'	1-3'	Apr-Sept		X	X
Coreopsis (*Coreopsis* spp.)	1-3'	1-2'	May-July		X	X
Gaillardia (*Gaillardia x grandiflora*)	2-3'	1-2'	June-Sept		X	X
Garden Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*)	2-4'	2-3 '	July-Sept		X	X
Goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*)	2-3'	2-3'	Aug-Oct		X	X
Golden Alexander (*Zizia aurea*)	1½-3'	1½ - 2'	May-June	X	X	X
Joe Pye Weed (*Eutrochium* spp.)	2-7'	1-4'	July-Sept		X	X
Milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.)	2-3'	1-2'	June-Aug	X	X	X
Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)	2-3'	1-2'	June-Aug	X	X	X
Purple Prairie Clover (*Dalea purpurea*)	1-3'	1-1½'	June-Sept	X	X	X
Stonecrop Sedum, Tall (*Sedum* spp.)	1½-2'	1½ - 2'	Sept-Oct		X	X
Western Ironweed (*Vernonia baldwinii*)	2-5'	1-1½ '	July-Sept	X	X	X
Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)	1½-2'	1-1½'	Apr-May		X	X
Wooly Verbena (*Verbena stricta*)	2-5'	1½ -2'	May-Sept	X	X	X
Yarrow (*Achillea* spp.)	1-3'	1-3'	June-Sept		X	X

Trees & Shrubs

Common/Scientific Name	Height	Spread	Bloom Time	🐛	🦋	🐝
Viburnum (*Viburnum* spp.)	4-12'	3-12'	May-June		X	X
Butterfly Bush (Buddleia spp.)	3-12'	4-8'	June-Sept		X	X
Chinkapin Oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*)	35-40'	40-45'	March-April	X		
Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)	8-40'	6-25'	March-April	X		
Elm Tree (*Ulmus* spp.)	40-60'	40-60'	March-April	X		
Hackberry Tree (*Celtis occidentalis*)	40-60'	40-50'	March-April	X		
Ninebark (Physocarpus opulifolius)	4-8'	4-6'	May-Jun		X	X
Paw Paw Tree (*Asimina triloba*)	15-30'	15-30'	April-May	X	X	X
Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)	6-12'	6-12'	March	X		X
Serviceberry (*Amelanchier* spp.)	8-25'	10-25'	April	X	X	X
Chaste Tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*)	5-12'	4-8'	July-Aug		X	X

🐛 = *Food Source For Caterpillars*   🦋 = *Supports Butterflies & Moths*   🐝 = *Supports Bees & Others*