

## **Gardening For Pollinators; Creating a Pollinator Paradise**

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Objective: Make your own pollinator paradise. Learn the steps for creating a landscape that attracts and supports bees, butterflies and other beneficial creatures. Discover the plants and garden features that will make your yard a great home for pollinators.

### **Why attract pollinators to your garden?**

#### **Simple Steps to Create a Pollinator Friendly Landscape**

##### **Use a wide variety of plants that bloom from early spring into late fall**

- Help pollinators find and use them by planting in big patches, rather than single plants.
- Include plants native to your region. Native plants are adapted to your local climate, soil and native pollinators.
- Do not forget that night-blooming flowers will support moths and bats.

##### **Avoid modern hybrid flowers, especially those with "doubled" flowers**

- Often plant breeders have unwittingly left the pollen, nectar, and fragrance out of these blossoms while creating the "perfect" blooms for us.

##### **Eliminate pesticides**

- By practicing Organic Gardening fundamentals, you may never have to consider using a pesticide or herbicide.
- If you must use a pesticide, use the least-toxic material possible and consult the Grow Smart Grow Safe guide – [www.growsmartgrowsafe.org](http://www.growsmartgrowsafe.org)
- Read labels carefully before purchasing, as many pesticides are especially dangerous for bees. Use the product properly. Spray at night when bees and other pollinators are not active.

##### **Organic Check List**

Build healthy soil

Use the least toxic approach

Work with nature

Water wisely

Right plant, right place, right time

Conserve resources

Encourage biodiversity

Learn as you grow

##### **Include larval host plants in your landscape**

- If you want colorful butterflies, grow plants for their caterpillars. They WILL eat them, so place them where unsightly leaf damage can be tolerated.
- Accept that some host plants are less than ornamental if not outright weeds.
- A butterfly guide will help you determine the plants you need to include.

**Create a damp salt lick for butterflies and bees**

- Use a dripping hose, drip irrigation line, or place your bird bath on bare soil to create a damp area. Mix a small bit of table salt (sea salt is better!) or wood ashes into the mud.

**Don't over-tidy, leave some of nature's mess**

- By leaving dead trees, or at least an occasional dead limb, you provide essential nesting sites for native bees. Make sure these are not a safety hazard for people walking below.
- Leave a little bare soil for ground dwelling bumblebees and other pollinators.
- You can also build a home for mason bees, leaf cutter bees and other pollinators by drilling holes of varying diameter about 3 to 5 inches deep in a piece of scrap lumber mounted to a post or under eaves. Bee condos are available premade in many garden centers and Costco.

**Add to nectar resources such as a hummingbird feeder**

- To make artificial nectar, use four parts water to one part table sugar. Never use artificial colors, sweeteners, honey, or fruit juices.
- Place something red on the feeder.
- Clean your feeder with hot soapy water at least twice a week to keep it free of mold.

**Butterflies and other pollinators need resources other than nectar**

- They are attracted to unsavory foodstuffs, such as moist animal droppings, urine and rotting fruits.
- Try putting out slices of overripe bananas, oranges and other fruits, or a sponge in a dish of lightly salted water to see which butterflies come to investigate. Sea salt provides a broader range of micronutrients than regular table salt.

**Learn more about pollinators**

- Anything that flies or crawls moves pollen around. Forgotten pollinators include solitary and social bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds, flies, flower beetles, solitary wasps and mud dabbers, bats and bumblebees.
- Get some guidebooks and learn to recognize the pollinators in your neighborhood.
- Experiment with a pair of close-focusing binoculars for butterflies, bees and hummingbirds.
- Start your own "bug list."

## Easy to Grow Flowers for Pollinators

Pollinators and beneficial insects are attracted to a garden with many flowers. In their adult stage, many beneficials need to sip flower nectar to survive. Also, they will choose such a place to lay their eggs. After the eggs hatch, the larvae will stay around and get fat feeding on summer insect pests and plants.

The flowers that are most attractive to beneficial insects have open floral nectaries. Plant flowers so they bloom as many months of the year as possible rather than lots of flowers in bloom at once.

All members of a plant family share similar flower characteristics, and there are some families that are especially favored by beneficial bugs:

### Onion Family *Amaryllidaceae*

Often called alliums, onions form a flowerhead that consists of many individual flowers providing numerous feeding opportunities on a single plant.

Chives      Garlic Chives      Welsh Onions      Leeks      Bunching onions

### Cabbage Family *Brassicaceae*.

These valuable spring flowering plants provide nectar for hummingbirds, lacewings and lady beetles.

Alyssum      Arugula      Bok Choy      Kale      Mustards      Sprouting Broccoli

### Carrot Family *Apiaceae*.

This family is so popular with beneficial insects that sometimes you can't see the flower for the bugs!

Carrots      Cilantro      Dill      Fennel      Parsley      Lovage

### Pea Family *Fabaceae*

Pea flowers supply nectar through their secondary nectaries providing food very early in the spring, before most flowers have started blooming.

Fava beans      Vetch      Snap, shelling and snow peas      Snap or dry beans

### Sunflower Family *Asteraceae*

These nectar-producing marvels are far and away the best family for providing nectar. Choose single-petaled varieties for insect attraction.

Zinnias      Calendula      Marigolds      Dandelions      Sunflowers      Jerusalem artichokes

### **Buckwheat Family *Polygonaceae***

Summer bloomers with hundreds of tiny flowers are favored by beneficial wasps and hover flies.

Garden Sorrel      Perennial Buckwheat      Annual Buckwheat

### **Pink Family *Caryophylliaceae***

The sweet smell of carnations for the gardener and the delicious nectar for beneficial insects.

Baby's breath      Carnations      Dianthus      Rose campion      Sweet William

### **Teasel Family *Dipsacaceae***

The pincushion flowers are beloved by the many hover fly species that live in your garden. The hover fly is a pollinator and its young are voracious eaters of aphids.

Teasel      Scabiosa      Pincushion Flower

### **Mint Family *Lamiaceae***

Members of this family make flower stalks that consist of many tiny flowers. Some, such as Motherwort, have secondary nectaries along the stem.

Bee Balm      Catmint      Oregano      Lemon Balm      Sage      Thyme

### **Resources**

Grow Smart, Grow Safe guide, [www.growsmartgrowsafe.org](http://www.growsmartgrowsafe.org)

*Maritime Northwest Garden Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, Lisa Taylor, 2014

*Your Farm in the City*, Lisa Taylor, 2011

*Living With Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest*, Russell Link, 2004

*Garden Insects of North America*, Whitney Cranshaw, 2004

*Rodale's Color Handbook of Garden Insects*, Anna Carr, 1979

*Weeds of the West*, Tom D. Whitson, 2006

*Attracting Pollinators to Your Garden Using Native Plants*, US Forest Service Publication for western Montana,

<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/documents/AttractingPollinatorsV5.pdf>