



Bringing Wildlife Home

# Pollinator Gardening

Pollinators are animals that move from plant to plant while searching for protein-rich pollen or high-energy nectar to eat. As they go, they are dusted by pollen and move it to the next flower, fertilizing the plant and allowing it to reproduce and form seeds, berries, fruits and other plant foods that form the foundation of the food chain for other species—including humans. Pollinators are themselves important food sources for other wildlife. Countless birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians eat the protein and fat-rich eggs, larvae, or adult forms of pollinators, or feed them to their young. Pollinators play a critical role in the food supply for wildlife and people!



Bees are well-known pollinators, but over 100,000 invertebrates—including butterflies, moths, wasps, flies, and beetles—and over 1,000 mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, act as pollinators. Pollinators worldwide are in decline. Habitat loss, invasive species, parasites, and pesticides are largely to blame. But you can help and here's how!

## Pollinator Gardens Tips

- Plant native flowering plants in your garden. Learn more about the plants in your region that pollinators evolved with and rely upon at <http://www.nwf.org/nativeplants>
- Provide water for pollinators by filling a shallow birdbath with gravel or creating a muddy patch in a corner of your yard.
- Attract hummingbirds by planting dense shrubs for nesting and putting out a nectar feeder.
- Most native bees are solitary and lay eggs in tiny tunnels in dead trees, fallen branches, hollow stems, or in sandy soil. Leave standing dead trees, fallen logs, and bare patches of sandy soil. You can even put out a bee house filled with nesting tubes.
- Butterflies need special “host plants” as food for their caterpillars. Planting host plants attracts more butterflies and allows them to successfully produce the next generation. Monarchs are in serious decline due to loss of their only host plant, milkweed, so planting it will help the species recover. Find host plants for butterflies and moths native to your area at [www.nwf.org/nativeplants](http://www.nwf.org/nativeplants).
- Some plants attract more pollinators. These guides ([www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/syndromes.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/syndromes.shtml)) can help you select native plants for additional pollinators you'd like to see in your garden.

More than 85 percent of flowering plants require an insect for pollination which allows for the production of fruit and seed. These fruits and seeds are a part of the diet of about 25 percent of birds, and many mammals.

Each year pollinators affect \$577 billion in global crops including \$235 billion the U.S.

Native bees pollinate an estimated 15 percent of U.S fruit, nut, vegetable and field crops.



Uniting all Americans to ensure wildlife thrive in a rapidly changing world.

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[www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife](http://www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife)

- Some native wildflowers are not only great plants for pollinators, but they also are unappetizing to deer. Find a list of deer-resistant native plants at [www.wildflower.org/collections/collection.php?collection=deer](http://www.wildflower.org/collections/collection.php?collection=deer)

## Don't Use Pesticides

- Insects are a sign of a healthy garden, and an important food source for birds. No need to spray!
- Attract ladybugs, predatory wasps and other natural enemies of pests. Native plants attract these beneficial pest predators.
- Hand-pick pests if you have an infestation or wash them off with a stream of water from a hose.
- If you must spray, only use organic or natural pest deterrents such as soap, garlic and chili pepper. Spray only at night, when flowers are not blooming, and when it's dry and windless.
- Use products that target specific pests rather than broad-spectrum ones. Avoid anything labeled as toxic to bees or that kills the "weedy" flowers pollinators visit. Specifically avoid garden products that include neonicotinoids. Learn more about avoiding these chemicals at [www.nwf.org/organicpractices](http://www.nwf.org/organicpractices).
- Carefully read and follow application instructions on any spray, using them sparingly.

## Join the Garden for Wildlife Movement!

Join the growing movement of people making a difference for wildlife where they live, work, learn, worship, and play! Just go to [www.nwf.org/garden](http://www.nwf.org/garden).

- Create a pollinator-friendly garden and have it recognized as a Certified Wildlife Habitat® in NWF's Garden for Wildlife program.
- Turn your whole city or town into a pollinator haven through a Community Wildlife Habitat™ project.
- Create a Schoolyard Habitat® to help pollinators and educate children about their importance.
- Create pollinator gardens at your office or your place of worship.
- Volunteer as a NWF Habitat Steward and help install pollinator-friendly wildlife gardens at your neighborhood schools and businesses.

## Pollinator Garden Challenge

- NWF has joined with many groups working to protect pollinators and their habitats in co-founding the National Pollinator Garden Network and has helped launch the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge.
- Every Certified Wildlife Habitat helps reach a million pollinator gardens to restore critical habitat.
- Spread the word! Tell friends, families, co-workers and neighbors how they can help pollinators.
- Learn more about our partners at [www.millionpollinatorgardens.org](http://www.millionpollinatorgardens.org).



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