

PERENNIAL CARE

10 tips for pollinator planting

Pollination is a vital ecological process that involves the transfer of pollen between flowers. Pollinators are insects or animals that aid in pollen transfer including: bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, moths, ants, beetles, flies, wasps, and bats. A garden that is beneficial to pollinators in all life stages helps to sustain populations and provides numerous benefits to both humans and the natural world around us.

1 Choose plants with staggered bloom times to provide a reliable nectar source and pollen supply all season long. Strive to have at least three plants in bloom from early spring through late fall.

2 Vary flower shape and structure to support a wide range of pollinators.

Composite: Provide a platform for resting, many small blooms close together.

Echinacea (Coneflower), *Ratibida* (Prairie/Gray-Headed Coneflower), *Liatris* (Blazing Star), *Symphyotrichum* (Aster), *Solidago* (Goldenrod)

Umbelliferous: Numerous small, shallow flowers and flat landing platform.

Zizia (Golden Alexander), *Astrantia* (Masterwort), *Angelica* (Garden Angelica), *Foeniculum* (Fennel), *Anethum* (Dill)

Tubular/Bilabiate: Long tubular flowers, often with a flat lower lip for perching.

Lobelia (Cardinal Flower), *Chelone* (Turtlehead), *Monarda* (Bee Balm/Wild Bergamot), *Pycnanthemum* (Mountain Mint), *Penstemon* (Beardtongue)

Nodding: Flowers that nod or hang down with no suitable landing area.

Allium cernuum (Nodding Onion), *Thalictrum* (Early Meadow Rue), *Pulsatilla* (Pasqueflower), *Geum* (Prairie Smoke), *Dicentra* (Bleeding Heart)

Complex: Concealed nectar in spurs that can only be reached by visitors with a long tongue or proboscis.

Aquilegia (Columbine), *Asclepias* (Milkweed/Butterfly Weed), *Viola* (Violet), *Tropaeolum* (Nasturtium), *Delphinium* (Larkspur)

- 3 Plant large, dense groupings of like flowers.** Large swaths of color are easier for pollinators to locate and provide better forage, with many pollinators only able to travel a short distance each day.
- 4 Plant for all stages of life to support pollinator reproduction.** Provide habitat and forage options. Position larval host plants out of direct sight lines to conceal feeding damage. Provide ground nesting sites and hollow stems or wood bee blocks for native bee populations.
- 5 Plant native plants** as much as possible as they are phenomenal pollen and nectar producers and are easy for pollinators to navigate. Native plants provide the greatest benefit to pollinators in all life stages.
- 6 Provide fresh, clean, shallow water saucers for pollinators.** Sanitize and refill regularly.
- 7 Provide flat stones or pavers for pollinators** to rest and warm up in the sun.
- 8 Avoid and ideally eliminate pesticide and fungicide use entirely.** Biological and cultural control methods should be prioritized and exhausted before considering chemical control methods.
- 9 Delay spring garden cleanup** at least until temperatures are consistently above 50F to preserve habitat and protection for overwintering pollinators, or skip most of the cleanup entirely. Pollinators overwinter in a variety of plant materials, with some nesting in hollow stems, and others choosing to burrow into leaf litter. Leave plants standing through the winter to provide habitat and shelter, as well as winter interest.
- 10 Maintain pollinator plantings** to manage invasive species, weed pressure, and plant health. Successful pollinator plantings can be low maintenance once established, but will still require some degree of regular maintenance to be as beneficial as possible, especially in the first few years after planting.