

North Country Master Gardener Volunteers

Pollinators in the Garden

Natures Garden is a garden that pollinators, such as butterflies and bees naturally flock. It includes flowers that provide nectar throughout the seasons. As the season ends, the reward is your own “living birdseed” feeders. Birds are particularly attracted to the seeds of Asters, Black Eyed Susans and Blazing Stars.

Why Have a Pollinator Garden?

Butterflies, bees and other insects are attracted to flowers in search of nectar. They brush up against the anthers of a flower, get pollen grains on their body and carry the pollen from flower to flower. A Pollinator Garden is a garden predominately with flowers that provide nectar or pollen for a range of pollinating insects. A pollinator garden can be any size. You might only have a balcony or a small yard, but you can still plant pollinator friendly flowers there.

How to Create a Pollinator Garden

The six plants in this brochure are designed to give any gardener the greatest success with their Pollinator Garden. Pollinators prefer gardens that:

1. Include native plants;
2. Bloom from early spring into late fall providing nectar all garden season long;
3. Have plants that vary in flower shapes and sizes; and
4. Include different colors--bees tend to be attracted to purples, yellows and white; hummingbirds and butterflies to red flowers.

When designing a Pollinator Garden, analyze the property for things such as water drainage, soil types, sun light exposure and wind patterns. Pollinator gardens can create their own microclimate—areas with good southeastern exposure and spaces that are protected from prevailing winds.

If your garden is going to be a border or up against a structure, arrange the tallest plants in the back, mid-size in the middle and short plants in the front of the bed. If you are planting an island style, set your taller plants in the middle, medium heights around the center and shorter plants at the edges.

If not planting an informal, open field garden, consider plant placement. It is often best to use groupings of at least three of the same plant together. Odd numbers (1, 3, 5, etc.) tend to look better than even numbers. In addition, bee pollinators prefer to collect nectar/pollen from a single species of flower during each outing, so planting in masses ensures pollinators can practice “flower constancy.” Consider designing and planting your garden so that over time it will consist of a grouping of 3 to 7 plants of the same species.

Now that the garden space has been designed, loosen the soil and amend with organic matter. Though the plants have their own soil preferences, many of the North Country Master Gardener Volunteers have successfully planted these flowers together in the same space. Water regularly until your bed becomes established—do not let the new plants dry out.

Other considerations for your Pollinator Garden include enhancing nesting opportunities for the pollinators and their families: preserve areas of bare or sparsely vegetated, well-drained soil; preserve dead or dying trees and shrubs; minimize mulch; consider nesting boxes; and maintain a nearby water source, such as a water garden or birdbath.

***Lupinus perennis*—Wild Lupine**

Lupine's dense spires of bright blue flowers signal the coming of spring. Lupine is the only food plant for the larvae of the endangered Karner Blue butterfly. Plant 12"-24" apart. Plants grow 1'-3' tall on sandy loam to dry sandy soil. They do not grow well in clay soils. Lupine is a biennial.



Photo provided by Sue Reinardy, a picture of the wild area on her property.

***Asclepias tuberosa* —Butterfly Weed**

Beautiful bright orange flowers cover the plant from mid – summer until early fall. They attract bees, hummingbirds, moths and butterflies. Plant 15"-18" apart. It blooms reliably and plants will reach 2'-3' tall in dry sandy soil, as well as well drained loams.

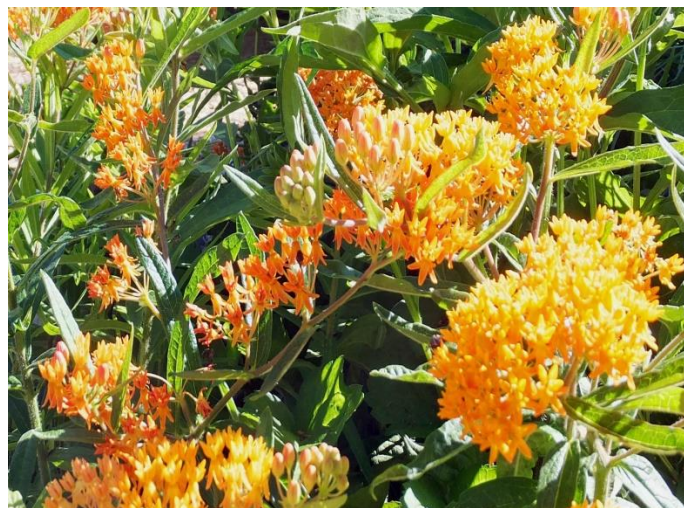


Photo provided by Sue Reinardy, a picture taken at the Spooner Agriculture Research Station Teaching and Display Gardens.

***Asclepias incarnata* —Swamp Milkweed**

The Swamp Milkweed is the preferred food source of the Monarch caterpillar. Bright pink and red vanilla scented flowers appear in June and July. Plant 1'-2' apart. It grows 5' tall on moist soils with good drainage.



Photo provided by Donna Amidon, a picture from her garden.

***Liatris spicata*—Blazing Star Liatris**

The Blazing Star is one of the most spectacular and majestic of the prairie plants. Large spikes of tightly bunched magenta flowers bloom from the top to the bottom of the stalk. Liatris blooms from mid to late summer and is an excellent cut flower. Plant 12"-15" apart. It grows 3'-4' tall, prefers full sun and is easily grown in average medium, well-drained soils.



Photo provided by Katie Childs, a picture from her garden.

Rudbeckia hirta—Black-eyed susan

The Black-eyed Susan is the best known of all the prairie flowers. It is the easiest to grow and a single plant can produce hundreds of blooms over the summer and into the fall. It is an excellent cut flower. Plant 12”–18” apart. Plants grow 2’-3’.



Photo provided by Carla TePaske, a picture from her garden.

Aster novae-angliae —New England Asters

(You will find Aster species reclassified as Symphyotrichum novae-angliae in some references)

The New England Aster is one of the tallest and most magnificent of the fall asters. It serves as an important late – season (after frost) nectar for a variety of butterflies. Plant 12”-18” apart. Plants grow 3’-6’ tall and require fertile soil and adequate moisture.



Photo provided by Carla TePaske, a picture from her garden.