

# POLLINATORS NEED YOUR HELP

*The Million Pollinator Garden Challenge* is a nationwide call to action to preserve and create gardens and landscapes that help revive the health of bees, butterflies, birds, bats and other pollinators across America. Visit [www.millionpollinatorgardens.org](http://www.millionpollinatorgardens.org) to register and join public and private gardens and landscapes to support pollinators.

**Pollinators** include:

**Bees:** Bees are one of the most important pollinators for crops. They are so important as pollen readily sticks to them. Bees are high energy, needing lots of pollen and nectar from a variety of plants to feed themselves and their young. Nesting habitats vary by bee type, so it is important to identify your local bees.



**Butterflies:** Butterflies have four life stages: egg, caterpillar, pupa, and adult; all of these have differing habitat needs. Host plants provide the caterpillar with food and shelter and can be very specific. An example is the Monarch butterfly and milkweed plant.

**Birds:** In particular hummingbirds, which are important in wildflower pollination. Nectar is 90% of a hummingbird's diet, which means they need to eat every 10 to 15 minutes and visit 1,000-2,000 flowers per day! Hummingbirds also need a water source.



**Flies:** Flies may have been the first pollinators and are second to bees in increasing flower diversity throughout evolution. Flies (specifically tropical midges) are the only pollinators of *Theobroma cacao* (chocolate)!

**Beetles:** The “mess and soil” pollinators, it is common for beetles to eat through petals and other flower parts in order to get to nectar. Some popular ornamental plants pollinated by beetles include Magnolia, Sassafras, Calycanthus, and pond lilies.

**Pollinators** are responsible for 1 out of 3 bites of food we take each day, and yet pollinators are at a critical point in their own survival. Many reasons contribute to their recent decline. We know for certain, however, that more nectar and pollen sources provided by more flowering plants and trees will help improve their health and numbers. Increasing the number of pollinator-friendly gardens and landscapes will help revive the health of bees, butterflies, birds, bats and other pollinators across the country.

On the next page, we provide **Tips and Best Practices** for protecting and supporting Pollinators.

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*Unearth the Possibilities*

Creating pollinator-friendly landscapes can help in the effort to support local pollinators and improve pollinator health. There are several simple steps that can be taken to encourage pollinators in the garden. A lot of pollinator friendly-plants are great landscape plants and may already be in your garden.

## Gardening Tips

- Diversity of plant material is important: trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, fruit bearing plants, hedge-rows, non-mowed areas, wildflowers, and grasses all support pollinators.
- Have a sequence of flowers from spring to fall.
- Native species generally have more pollen and nectar than cultivated plants. Double flowers often have less pollen and nectar than single flowers.
- Perennials usually offer more nectar than annuals. Wildflowers can be some of the best sources of pollen.
- Sunny areas are very important, but shade and part shade areas are needed for protection from inclement weather.
- Clean water sources are important.
- Be creative – there are many different possibilities outside of traditional home landscapes for supporting pollinators including containers and window boxes, community gardens, and wildflower meadows.
- Provide sheltered nesting areas and overwintering habitats.
- Provide bare spots for ground nesting bees.



## Practices to Protect Pollinators

- Limit the use of insecticides.
- Encourage beneficial insects.
- Use non-chemical, organic solutions when possible.
- Use mechanical or manual control of weeds and invasive vegetation whenever possible – mowing, cutting, pulling, girdling, or tilling.
- Mulch to avoid weeds - lessen the need for chemical control.
- Use perennial ground covers for weed control.
- Think about pollinators when doing garden clean-up. Pollinators use plants as overwintering sites.

*Source: UMass Extension Website*