



BEE a Pollinator Protector



Did you know that one out of every three bites of food you eat is thanks to pollinators? Somewhere between 75-95% of all flowering plants require help with pollination and those helpers come in the form of bees, birds, butterflies, bats and other little critters. Pollinators protect our food supply and play an important role in supporting healthy ecosystems. But these little helpers need a helping hand themselves – learn how you can be a pollinator protector!

Leave the Leaves

There is no better excuse to cut back on fall clean-up than protecting pollinators. Fallen leaves are a valuable resource, not garbage. Leaves provide protection for overwintering pollinators and for native plants. Many pollinators rely on leaves for survival, so don't feel guilty about cutting back on cleaning up your yard this fall:

- Remove leaves on walkways or where they are smothering plants
- Mow right over leaves to create a mulch that will naturally nourish your lawn
- Don't clear leaves under tree canopies, around shrubbery or within gardens – they provide a nutrient-rich layer of protection for overwintering pollinators and plants
- Avoid cutting back native stems – they can serve as a safe harbor for nesting bees
- Stick to a rake or a broom if you can – leaf blowers are noisy, disturb pollinators and other wildlife, and leave a carbon footprint 30 times that of a car
- Save yard clean-up for springtime if possible – try not to disturb leaves until temperatures are back above 50 degrees Fahrenheit for several days



Plant Native Plants

Pollinators need native plants and native plants need pollinators. Research indicates that native plants are four times more likely to attract pollinators than non-native plants, and native plants are already best adapted to our local climate, growing seasons and soils. Here are some tips for creating a thriving, pollinator-friendly native garden:

- Buy plants at a local native plant nursery if possible – to learn more about which species are native to this area and good for attracting pollinators, check out the QR code
- Try to select a variety of native species that will result in flowers of different shapes, sizes and colors – diversity is key in a good pollinator garden
- Try to choose a combination of native species that will bloom from early spring to late fall to maximize the timeframe for pollinators to get nourishment
- Plant native species in clumps or clusters to make them easier for pollinators to locate
- Minimize mulching – mulch is good for preventing weeds but very hard on bees who nest and rest in the ground

Pass on Pesticides

Honeybees and other pollinators are at great risk from pesticide use – pesticides are acutely toxic to bees and can kill them instantly. Exposed bees that survive can suffer disruptions to learning or memory or carry pesticides back to the hive. These chemicals can also impair reproduction. If you HAVE to use chemicals, do what you can to reduce the negative impact on pollinators:

- Apply minimum recommended dose and choose a pesticide that is effective for the target pest and least toxic to non-pest species
- Avoid applying to flowers since that is the part of the plant that pollinators visit
- Avoid applying when wildflowers are in bloom and pollinators are more likely to be exposed
- Bees are most active during the day – spray in the evening or at night
- Remove flowers from flowering weed species before applying pesticides
- Be aware of drift and open water sources – wind or water can carry chemicals far beyond the intended application area, harming pollinators and other wildlife miles away

