



Bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, flies, and wasps play a vital role in our food supply and in our gardens.

As they gather nectar to feed themselves, these creatures transfer pollen from male to female flower parts, which leads to reproduction in the form of fruit and seeds. Many vegetable and fruit crops, as well as nut, seed, and fiber crops (such as cotton) rely on insects for pollination.

The diverse population of pollinators is threatened by excessive pesticide use, habitat destruction, monocultures (like lawns and cornfields), invasive plants, and climate change. Gardeners can make a difference by planting gardens that welcome pollinators and provide for their needs. More than 50 neighborhood green spaces managed through the [PHS Philadelphia LandCare program](#) have pollinator gardens. To create one in your yard, choose native plants and plan for a succession of blooms so that the pollinators have nectar throughout the season. Research has shown that plants with large blooms made up of tiny flowers attract the widest range of small bees, flies, beetles, and wasps.

10 Pollinator Plants

A healthy pollinator garden includes a wide range of host plants, including flowers, herbs, grasses, shrubs, and trees. **Below are 10 options** that are native to the Mid-Atlantic region. The list includes a few that are suited to soggy and shady spots, and others that thrive in full sun. The greater the variety of these plants in your garden, the more likely you are to attract a diverse population of pollinators.

American Black Elderberry

(Sambucus canadensis)

Bunches of white flowers bloom from May to July on this 12-foot-tall shrub. The edible, dark purple fruits form after the blossoms are pollinated.

Boneset

(Eupatorium perfoliatum)

Small, fluffy, white flowers appear on boneset's 4- to 6-foot tall stems in late summer to fall. It thrives in damp soil and partial shade, and it's a smart choice for rain gardens.

Coastal plain Joe Pye Weed

(Euthrochium dubium)

Topping out at 4 feet tall, this species of Joe Pye Weed is shorter than other types. Its clusters of blooms, ranging in color from pale pink to dark purple, start opening in midsummer and persist for several weeks.

Mountain Mint

(Pycnanthemum muticum)

A perennial wildflower, this mint grows up to 3 feet tall and opens clusters of tiny white to lavender tubular flowers from mid to late summer. It has a distinct minty scent and, like other types of mint, it is prone to spreading rapidly.

Northern Spicebush

(Lindera benzoin)

A shrub that grows 6 to 12 feet tall, northern spicebush has dense clusters of tiny, pale yellow flowers in early spring. It is the preferred food source for caterpillars of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly.

Red Buckeye

(Aesculus pavia)

The scarlet to orange-red, narrow-tubular flowers attract hummingbirds and many insects in spring. Red Buckeye can be pruned into shrub size or allowed to become a small tree of about 20 feet high.





10 Pollinator Plants cont.

Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)

Like other types of milkweed, this species also hosts monarch butterfly caterpillars. The adult butterflies and bees are attracted to the clusters of purple-pink flowers on 2 to 6 foot tall stems in late summer.

Stiff goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*)

In fall, when few other native plants are blooming, goldenrods become a valuable nectar source for pollinators. The 4- to 5-foot-tall plants grow well in dry soils and stand up to wind and storms.

Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea virginica*)

This 3- to 5-foot-tall shrub is covered in long, white, sweetly scented, catkin-like "spires" in May and June. It grows well in heavy shade and damp soil.

Wild Crabapple (*Malus coronaria*)

A small tree that grows 15 to 30 feet tall, wild crabapple is covered in fragrant pink flowers for weeks in spring. Its fruits are small, hard, and bitter-tasting, but they can be used for making cider or preserves.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Water

Pollinators depend on a constant supply of fresh water. You can provide that with a fountain, a birdbath, or just a shallow dish of water. If the water isn't running, keep the receptacle replenished and clean throughout the season.

Shelter

Allow parts of your yard to be uncultivated, giving pollinators places to hide from predators and to lay eggs. Even a little corner where leaves, weeds, fallen branches, and other debris accumulate will host a variety of wild species.

Certification

The National Wildlife Federation offers a certification program that leads you through the steps to creating pollinator-friendly gardens and gives you recognition once you meet the criteria. [Learn more at nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org).

LEARN MORE

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