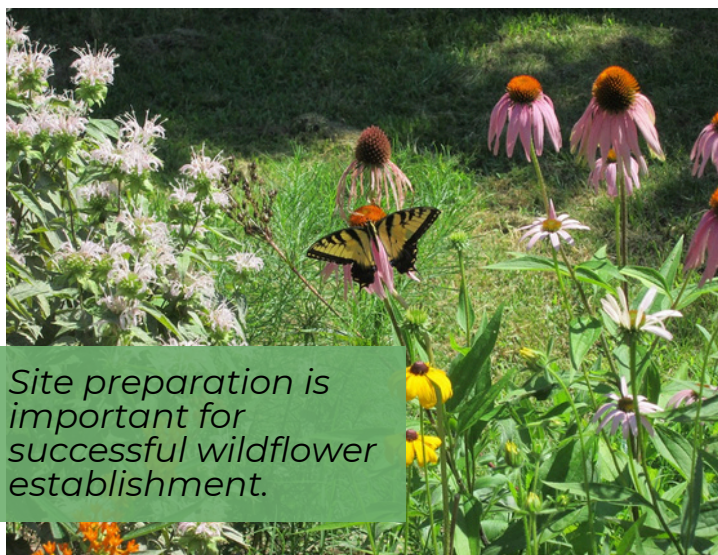




CREATING A POLLINATOR GARDEN



Site preparation is important for successful wildflower establishment.

Wildflowers are beautiful, ecologically valuable additions to any garden. Their colors span the rainbow, and their varying heights, forms, and flower shapes offer endless possibilities. Wildflowers native to your area will provide the most benefit to pollinator communities, but garden plants can help too. Whether you have a small garden, a lawn space, or a few planters, with a little know-how, any area can be used to support pollinators.

SITE SELECTION AND PREPARATION

Look for an area in your yard that is underutilized - bare garden patches, lawn that you don't need, or scrubby areas. Sunny areas are best but shade areas can support pollinators, too, with the right plants. To prepare the site you'll need to remove weeds or grass, thin out existing plants, or, if using seed, remove mulch (soil coverings such as wood chips or leaves). You have many options to prepare your site for wildflowers; hand pulling weeds, smothering, and solarizing are a few options. If you are planning to create habitat in planters, make sure you have some pots with soil and good drainage, and you are ready to go!



Smothering a sod area before layering soil and planting.

SELECTING PLANTS

Native plants use less water, are adapted to local weather patterns, and support locally native pollinators. Non-native but non-invasive plant species can also provide benefits. Wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, vines, and trees can all be beneficial, so choose what fits your site best. If possible, aim for a mix of plant structures, a range in bloom times, and diverse flower shapes/colors. See the list of [native pollinator plants for your region](#) to start you on your plant selection journey.

SEEDING AND PLANTING

You have the option of using seeds, plants (plugs), or both to create your garden. There are pros and cons to each and considerations when creating your habitat.

SEEDS - Seeds can offer great coverage of an area for a lower cost than plants. However, they will take a bit more time to establish. You'll need a weed and vegetation free area before sowing your seeds. The best time to sow seeds in most areas is in the fall, before the wet/cold season. But seeds can also be sown in the winter or early spring. Don't sow seeds in summer—often it's too hot and dry for good germination. Bulking up your seed mix with a handful of clean sand or vermiculite can help you spread your seeds more evenly across your site. Sow your seeds across your prepared area and gently rake, use a roller or plywood, or walk over the soil to firmly press the seeds into the soil. You want the seeds to have contact with the soil, but not be buried more than 1/8 inch. If sowing into pots or planters, simply sprinkle seeds on the surface of the soil and press gently.



PLANTS - Potted plants are more expensive than seed but can provide a beautiful habitat right away. Fall is usually the best time to plant, but plants can be planted any time of year as long as they get regular (2-3 times per week) water for the first year. Water plants immediately after planting, throughout the first year, and during especially dry periods. You can put some mulch (such as wood chips, straw, or leaves) around the plants to reduce weeds and maintain moisture.



Add a sign to your garden to show others that your garden is feeding pollinators!

MAINTAIN YOUR GARDEN

Maintenance is crucial for successful pollinator gardens. If areas are well prepared, then less maintenance will be required. Be sure to control weeds so they don't take over the habitat. Pull whenever you see them but minimize soil disturbances. You can mulch around plants to minimize weeds, but try to keep some bare areas of soil between plants for ground nesting bees. You can add plants in following years if you need to fill in gaps. Think of pollinator garden maintenance like brushing your teeth; consistent care is key to keeping your habitat free of weeds and buzzing with pollinators.

Native plants, once established, will not need supplemental water unless there is an unusually dry period. Potted plants will need to be watered throughout the dry season as the plant roots can't expand beyond the pot.

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To view more detailed information on creating and maintaining a pollinator garden, visit [this page](#). Find plants that support pollinators for your region in our Ecoregional planting guides, our Find Your Roots tool, and our regional garden recipe cards.