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## Bee Friendly Gardening™

A Program of Pollinator Partnership

March 2024



### Pollinators for Dinner?

#### Trouble for Pollinators Means Trouble for All

Article and photos by Tom Ress

A more attractive creature than a pollinator can hardly be imagined. A vibrant yellow-and-black tiger swallowtail butterfly, a zebra-like garden tiger moth, a black-and-orange pipevine swallowtail caterpillar, these insects add beauty and life to our gardens and fields. Aesthetically pleasing and environmentally beneficial, pollinators—largely invertebrates—go about their business, pollinating our crops, flowers, and trees, all while adding a flash of color and a hint of movement to our landscapes. Butterflies, bees, moths, caterpillars; an army of critters rove through our gardens, yards, and fields. The life of a floating butterfly or a skittering moth seems carefree and easy.

But all is not sunshine and rainbows in the world of a pollinator. For a pollinating insect, it's a precarious world out there. A butterfly blithely flitting around in a flower garden is a vulnerable target for a hungry mockingbird. Although pollination is one of their primary roles in the environment, they have another nearly as important role as a food source for other animals. Caterpillars, butterflies, moths, and other pollinators are primary food sources for a wide variety of birds, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals.



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### The Perfect Lawn

Managing Stormwater Runoff

Morgan Keeling, Illinois River Watershed Partnership

You may not think that your lawn has much of an impact on the world beyond your block, but it does! We have been trained over generations to appreciate lawns and open space as they are uniform with grass freshly cut short and free of ruffage. Let's rethink our vision of a perfect lawn.

If you think about how the landscape looked in your neighborhood prior to development, you may see it dominated by weeds and brush. Look into your mind's eye a little further and you might see deep-rooted prairie grasses, deciduous trees, wildflowers, sedges, and maybe even some wetland plant species. The area that is now an engineered hardscape like mowed turf and Bermuda grass lawns, paved roads, homes, sidewalks, patios, sheds, carports, pools, hot tubs, basketball courts, and playgrounds used to be covered with a diverse mix of deep-rooted plants. Native plant species vs. lawn grass or exotic (and sometimes invasive!) plants have deep root systems that have evolved to thrive in our region. Rainfall that fell on what is now your neighborhood mostly soaked into the ground and/or made its way to a wetland area to be soaked into the soil or evaporated. Today, that same rainfall lands on engineered hardscapes where it picks up contaminants, volume, and velocity before it arrives at a semblance of a natural stream channel or a low-lying area.



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### New Resource from Pollinator Partnership

As the previous article by Tom Ress mentioned, including more native plants in your space increases pollinator biomass which in turn feeds birds and other insect predators. Need help teasing apart native, non-native, and invasive plant terminology to know what to plant in your garden? [This new quick reference guide](#) from Pollinator Partnership will help.

POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP  
QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

*Planting plants that bees, butterflies, and other pollinators need can help save pollinators and ensure a healthy environment for future generations.*

When creating a pollinator garden or adding plants to your balcony or yard, selecting plants deliberately to support pollinators can help you beautify your area and also create a buzzing paradise for pollinators.

Plants can be grouped into two main types:

1. **Native plants:** plants that have been present on the landscape since before human intervention.
2. **Non-native plants:** plants that have been introduced, either deliberately or accidentally, usually by humans.

*Let's take a closer look at non-native plants, as some can be great for pollinators and others are detrimental.*

**Types of Non-Native Plants**

**1. Crop, garden, and ornamental plants:** those that we grow for food or for beauty, such as apples, lavender, and roses. They usually have been often modified from their natural state, by people, to better provide food or aesthetic appeal.

**2. Invasive plants:** those that are known to invade natural areas, causing harm to human health or the environment. Some garden and ornamental plants, that were brought to North America by settlers, are now known to invade natural areas. These plants can sometimes have a competitive advantage in their new range because they are released from the predators, diseases, and competitors in their native range. They can take over natural areas, crowding out native plants. This can have a devastating effect on pollinators, native plants, and entire ecosystems.

*Selecting plants native to your region will provide the most benefit to pollinators and the environment. As long as you are careful to avoid invasive plants, interweaving some of your favorite non-native plants can have a positive impact. Invasive plants should never be used in pollinator gardens and should be removed when possible.*

POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP

Protect their lives. Preserve ours.

[www.pollinator.org](http://www.pollinator.org)

Keep an eye on our growing collection of [quick reference guides](#) to help with all your pollinator-related needs!

### Native Seed Mixes

Wondering where to obtain native seeds to plant in your garden? We are proud to announce that Pollinator Partnership's Bee Friendly Gardening program has partnered with Stover Seed Company to create [Regional Pollinator Wildflower Seed Mixtures](#)! We're passionate about providing people with resources to promote biodiversity in their landscape. These regionally-specific native wildflower seed packets are the foundation to start your own Bee Friendly Garden, or the perfect way to expand or supplement if you already have one.

Pollinators bring us one out of every three bites of food we eat. By purchasing this packet, you not only beautify your surroundings but also contribute to the vital cause of supporting pollinators by preserving native plant habitat (a portion comes back into supporting Bee Friendly Gardening). Let's sow the seeds of sustainability together - happy seed shopping!



[BUY SEEDS](#)

#### Notable Dates:

- **April** - National Garden Month
- **April** - [National Native Plant Month](#)
- **April 14** - National Gardening Day
- **April 17** - International Bat Appreciation Day
- **April 22** - [Earth Day](#)
- It's never too early to start thinking about [Pollinator Week](#) - **June 17-23**

Brought to you by BFG - be a part of the Bee Friendly movement!



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