



## Well-Being in the Bee Friendly Garden

Aaron Michael, Founder & CEO of Earth Love Gardens

In addition to invaluable habitat for pollinators and other wildlife species, pollinator gardens provide much for the well-being of people too. As we humans evolved with nature, it is only natural that we respond in a positive way when we reconnect with nature. Working with and experiencing a pollinator garden has many proven benefits, including being outside and connecting with nature, being beneficial for children, and the fact that many native, pollinator-friendly plants are tasty too!



*The Boulder Public Library's Native Plant Demonstration Garden that provides visitors with connection and well-being.*

The mission of my company, Earth Love Gardens, is to create community and connection through gardens and landscapes. Since 2018, we have been helping our clients realize their visions of gardens that benefit the well-being of individuals and communities. We have designed and created gardens that not only provide habitat for pollinators, but provide intentional spaces of connection and healing for the people who visit them. Below are just some of the examples of how Bee Friendly Gardens provide for us in so many ways.

### The Benefits of Gardening

Gardeners are often happy, peaceful people, and there are scientific reasons for why. For example, studies show that directly touching the soil raises serotonin, a neurotransmitter in our brains that, among many things, affects our mood. The cause is a bacterium in the soil, *Mycobacterium vaccae*, that stimulates serotonin production. Also, just the act of caring for a garden and watching it grow lowers stress, anxiety, and depression, and further improves our mood. The physical movement of gardening, as we dig in the soil, care for plants, pull weeds, and more, provides steady physical movement that supports cardiovascular health. If you are growing veggies alongside your pollinator plants, which will benefit from the bee and butterfly visits, these veggies provide you with fresh food for a healthy, well-balanced diet.

There is also a social aspect to gardening, which can benefit our health and well-being. If you are gardening in a setting such as a community, working in the garden with others

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fosters a sense of social interaction and belonging. If you instead have your own pollinator garden and are not connected with a community garden, being involved with local native plant organizations, such as *Wild Ones*, is a great way to connect with people who also share the same joy and passion for growing pollinator gardens.

### **Being Outside and Connecting with Nature**

Whether in your yard or on a trail, just being outside and connecting with nature greatly benefits our well-being. We did not evolve in urban settings full of computer, phone, and TV screens, and being in these settings for too long can take a toll on our mental and physical health. To balance this out, according to the National Library of Medicine, studies have shown that our minds and bodies relax in settings of nature. To benefit our work and lives, according to WebMd, being connected with nature further boosts creativity and problem-solving abilities. Nature always has the answer, after all. Additionally, various studies show that being outside and connecting with nature further provides us with exercise, exposes us to vitamin D, improves our focus, improves our immunity, generally boosts our energy levels, and much more.

Directly experiencing pollinating animals benefits our well-being as well. What emotions are evoked when you encounter a butterfly in the garden? Being surrounded by pollinator gardens facilitate such feelings of wonder and positivity from the pollinators that you provide habitat for. When we watch a bumblebee pollinating the flowers near us, this act of witnessing keeps us still and calm, lowering our stress and increasing our sense of well-being. Having appreciation for pollinators as they support our plant and food systems and provide their beauty enhances our health, as studies reflect the many benefits of living a life of gratitude.

### **Pollinator Gardens Benefit Children**

Bee Friendly Gardens can also directly benefit children in many ways. Pollinators provide a great educational opportunity for children, from learning about the importance of biodiversity, to understanding how pollinators support plant production through their eating of nectar and spreading pollen, and appreciating the interconnectedness of life. Being exposed to natural environments such as pollinator gardens early on during development sets a baseline for a life rooted in nature and a generally healthy well-being.

### **Edible and Herbal Native Plants**

Native plants that provide habitat for pollinators and other wildlife species also provide habitat for humans, as many plants have edible and herbal value. Depending on where you live will determine which plants are native to your area; however, some native plants are endemic to most of North America, and some throughout the world. For example,



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serviceberry (*Amelanchier spp.*) grows in much of North America, providing its flowers for pollinators and tasty berries for birds and people. Common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) is found around the world and has many herbal benefits including wound healing, reducing inflammation, promoting digestive health, and calming properties. The ways in which plants support us also offer opportunities to connect with them, and by planting and nurturing them, we create a mutually beneficial relationship with nature—one that also supports pollinators and strengthens the broader ecosystem. As always, contact your health practitioner before consuming any plants that you are not familiar with.

### **Connect With Us**

As partners with Pollinator Partnership's Bee Friendly Gardening program, we are happy to be of support for your Bee Friendly Garden through our service of Consultation and Landscape Design. You can connect with Earth Love Gardens through our website, [www.EarthLoveGardens.com](http://www.EarthLoveGardens.com), and with me directly by email at [Aaron@EarthLoveGardens.com](mailto:Aaron@EarthLoveGardens.com).



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