



The Butterflyway Project

So You Want to Start a Pollinator Garden?

It is widely known that our pollinator species are in trouble. Reduced habitats, loss of food sources, detrimental agricultural practices, climate change – all contribute to overall pollinator decline. One of the best ways we can help as individuals is to *garden with pollinators in mind*. This brochure provides some basic information on how to get started.

Native plants are those that grow here naturally, i.e. not brought here from other countries. Nova Scotia natives are preferred but species native to Eastern Canada in general are acceptable. Native plants and pollinators have co-evolved together in a mutually beneficial relationship and the nectar is considered of higher value nutritionally. It is important, therefore, to plant native plants and shrubs to help our pollinators survive and thrive. However, non-native annuals can help pollinators in spring and early summer when the natives are not yet flowering. For example, Zinnias are a good choice as long as they are the flat-topped variety, not the doubles or pom-pom type.



Swallowtail on milkweed



Pollinator garden



Aster

Some Native Plant Powerhouses, not Weeds!

Asters and Goldenrods in particular support a high number of pollinator species and are often overlooked as garden plants. They are particularly good for butterflies and bees. The Milkweeds and Spotted Joe Pye Weed are attractive to a host of beneficial insects and deserve a corner in any pollinator garden.



Goldenrod

Getting Started

Gardening for pollinators can involve anything from a few native plants in amongst your current gardens, creating a new garden by getting rid of some lawn, all the way to 100% of your garden planted with natives! See overleaf for some pointers on getting started.





First...

- 🦋 Decide where you want to plant;
- 🦋 Determine if it is in the sun, partial shade, or shade, and moisture conditions, i.e. dry, wet, medium;
- 🦋 Draw the shape and size you want it to be;
- 🦋 Plan for multiples of each chosen plant (to fill about a 1m circle) to better catch the attention of the pollinators;
- 🦋 Select native plants and shrubs for their height, colour, and sun requirements;
- 🦋 Consider bloom times to ensure consistent flowers from spring to fall



Bumble bee on blue lobelia

Other considerations

- 🦋 If planting in an existing garden, be aware that native plants can get large quite quickly so leave enough room;
- 🦋 Avoid the use of chemical fertilisers and bug sprays as these will harm the pollinators as well as the target insect;
- 🦋 If you are starting a new garden from lawn, don't dig up the lawn, instead put down a good layer of cardboard in the fall and cover it with mulch. In the spring, plant through the layers;
- 🦋 Pollinators need different plant species for their life stages: the larvae need one source of food, while the adults may need a different one. For example, the Monarch butterfly will feed on most brightly coloured flowers but their caterpillars only eat Milkweed species;
- 🦋 And in the fall, don't get too fussy about cleaning up! Many pollinators overwinter here in places like leaf piles, rotting logs, the hollow stems of some flowers, and the crevices of trees. In fact the native red oak provides food and shelter to over 500 insect species!



Silvery checkerspot on Butterfly milkweed



Monarch caterpillar

ABOUT THE BUTTERFLYWAY PROJECT

The Blomidon Naturalists Society has joined with the David Suzuki Foundation on a project to support pollinators and to raise awareness of their critical status. We aim to increase pollinator habitat in public and private settings through action, education, and information sharing.

Check out our website for lots of information on pollinators, native plant gardening, plant lists and much more!

Blomidonnaturalists.ca/butterflyway-project

