



SHAWNEE COUNTY EXTENSION

MASTER GARDENERS

PRAIRIE POLLINATOR DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

CREATING A PRAIRIE POLLINATOR GARDEN

A prairie pollinator garden contains mostly native prairie plants that are perfectly adapted to our climate and are drought resistant. They require little maintenance, no fertilizers nor pesticides. A succession of flowers from early spring through late fall attract and support pollinating bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds and more.

PLANT SELECTION AND GARDEN DESIGN

Make plants native to your region the most frequent choice. When choosing hybrids of natives, avoid those that have made major changes to the plant, especially flower structure. These flowers may have lost their ability to produce nectar and pollen or may be so complex, as to prevent the pollinators access. (i.e., double flowers). Native cultivars that have been bred for improved disease resistance or a more compact plant, may not be a problem and are a good second choice.

Choose nectar and pollen rich flowers in a range of shapes, sizes, and colors. Be sure both tubular and cone shape flowers are included. Larval host plants for the butterfly species you wish to support are also important to include.

Have several different plants in bloom from early spring through late fall to provide nectar and pollen. Plant in drifts or groupings. This helps the pollinators find your garden.

Butterflies like an area protected from strong winds. A large rock or two in a sunny location allows butterflies to warm themselves and a place to rest. A salt lick or mud puddle provides minerals necessary for butterflies. A red hummingbird feeder among tubular flowers can help attract hummingbirds

MAINTENANCE PRINCIPLES

Opt for organic mulches over products like landscape fabric. Organic mulches allow plantings to spread naturally and improve the soil over time. Keeping some patches of soil bare to allow ground nesting bees and insects access to the ground.

Wait until spring to clean up your pollinator garden debris. Some pollinators overwinter in leaf litter, others in hollow stems. Keep fallen leaves in place. Tall stalks can be cut to 18-24 inches in height and the tops stored out of sight until late spring.

Avoid broad-spectrum pesticides. Instead, follow the control steps of Integrated Pest Management: cultural practices (plant choice, plant diversity, adequate water), biological control (beneficial insects, birds), and physical control (handpicking pests, trapping pests). If you choose to use pesticides, apply in the evening to avoid the busy times of pollinators and use something specifically formulated for the pests you are trying to control.

EXAMPLES OF PLANT BLOOMING SEASONS

Spring Flowering Natives	Bloom Time
eastern redbud (<i>Cercis canadensis</i>)	April
purple poppy mallow (<i>Callirhoe involucrata</i>)	May to June
beardtongue (<i>Penstemon grandiflora</i>)	May to June
rose verbena (<i>Glandularia canadensis</i>)	May to August
blue false indigo (<i>Baptisia australis</i>)	May to June
Summer Flowering Natives	
black-eyed Susan (<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>)	June to September
narrowleaf coneflower (<i>Echinacea angustifolia</i>)	June to July
butterflyweed (<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>)	June to August
blanketflower (<i>Gaillardia</i> spp.)	June to September
Fall Flowering Natives	
dotted gayfeather (<i>Liatris punctata</i>)	August to September
New England aster (<i>Symphotrichum novae-angliae</i>)	September to October
stiff goldenrod (<i>Solidago rigida</i>)	August to October

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