

PollinateTO: Best Practices for Creating Pollinator Habitat

Use this checklist to help you create or enhance pollinator-friendly habitat in your community.

1. Provide food sources

Plant native: Choose native plants, trees and shrubs. Locally grown and pesticide free are best.

- ✓ At least 75% of plants are native species
- ✓ If using non-native plants, invasive species are to be avoided

Plant host plants: Butterflies lay their eggs on specific plants (e.g. Monarchs lay their eggs on milkweed).

- ✓ Incorporate at least 2 different types of larval host plants
- ✓ At least one species of native milkweed is to be included

Provide continuous bloom: Pollinators need a continuous source of food from spring to fall.

- ✓ At least 2 different plants that bloom in spring
- ✓ At least 2 different plants that bloom in summer
- ✓ At least 2 different plants that bloom in fall

Mass plantings: Planting multiples of the same plant together in large groupings makes it easier for pollinators to find and collect pollen and nectar.

- ✓ Plants are planted in groups of 3 or more (at least 3 plants per species)

Plant single bloom varieties: Petals of double/triple bloom varieties block access to pollen and nectar.

- ✓ Single bloom varieties only

Avoid nativars (native cultivars): These are named varieties and not the true native species. Studies have shown that many nativars are less beneficial (e.g. contain less pollen) than the true native species.

- ✓ Try to avoid using nativars and stick to the true native species (if possible)

2. Provide nesting sites

Bare ground: Many native bees build nests in soil, so leave some bare patches and limit mulch use.

- ✓ Limited use of mulch – only mulch at the base of plant and leave bare patches of soil
- ✓ When using mulch opt for hay or straw mulch, which is a better alternative to wood chips.

Dead wood: Large branches and decaying logs can be kept in a sunny, south facing spot to provide additional shelter, resting sites for birds and nesting locations for bees and other wildlife.

- ✓ Dead branches or logs are incorporated in garden

Dead stems: Many bees hibernate and lay eggs in hollow stems. Dead stems that are put out for yard waste collection too early in spring will often contain overwintering bees.

- ✓ Bottom 8 inches of dead stems are left in place and cut stems are bundled and left in garden.
- ✓ Wait until it is consistently above 10 degree Celsius (April/May) before you remove dead stems.

Leaves: Leaf litter provides overwintering habitat for butterflies. Leaves can be removed in late spring (April/May), after overwintering adult butterflies are gone, or left in the garden to decompose.

- ✓ Leaves are raked into garden in the fall

Avoid tilling: Provide secure and undisturbed nesting sites for ground-nesting bees.

- ✓ Ground is not tilled

3. Provide water

Offer a drink: Pollinators need water. Add rocks for perch points to a birdbath or shallow dish of water.

- ✓ Water source provided or nearby (does not have to be directly in the garden)

4. Provide sun

Create sunny spots: Butterflies like to bask in the sun.

- ✓ Place flat rocks in sunny, sheltered locations

5. Provide a chemical free zone

Avoid pesticides: Ontario has a Pesticide Ban that prohibits the cosmetic use of pesticides.

- ✓ Pesticides will not be used on site at any time

6. Be mindful about maintenance

Don't clean up your garden too early in the spring: Leaves and dead stems contain overwintering bees, butterflies and moths. Too often the next generation of pollinators ends up in our yard waste.

- ✓ Wait until it is consistently above 10 degree Celsius (April/May) before you clean up

Prevent the spread of invasive plants: Monitor your garden for invasive plants and remove them when detected. For example, the invasive dog-strangling vine has a negative impact on Monarchs – female butterflies mistakenly lay their eggs on it, causing their larvae to starve.

- ✓ Invasive species are removed or reported (Call the Province of Ontario at 1-800-563-7711)

Plant material is replaced: Monitor garden regularly for dead plants and replace accordingly.

- ✓ Plant material that does not survive is replaced as required.

7. Spread the word

Tell your friends and neighbours: Help spread the word about what pollinators need by sharing your experience with others. Let them know how they can create pollinator habitat on their property.

- ✓ Each project participant shares with one other person

Offer tours of your garden: Inspire others to create pollinator gardens by showcasing yours.

- ✓ Annual garden tour offered (upon request)

Install signage: Identify your garden as pollinator-friendly. Create your own sign or use PollinateTO sign.

- ✓ Signage installed