



5 Ways to Support Pollinators & Beneficial Insects

1 Provide Native Plants

for Pollinators Native plants have been found to be four times more attractive to pollinators than non-natives, and many butterflies only lay eggs on native species. A true “butterfly garden” is one that includes native plants that provide nectar for adult butterflies and food for their caterpillars, including plants which flower at diverse times of year also supports pollinators. By planting a mix of annuals and perennials that bloom from early spring through mid-fall, you can ensure flowers in your garden most of the year and provide food for pollinators throughout their active seasons.

2 Re-Think Chemical Use

Before you spray, make sure that you truly have a pest problem! Many insects that visit gardens are harmless or even helpful to making plants grow. If you know that you have a pest issue, research alternative solutions by contacting your County Extension or Master Gardeners offices. If you must use chemicals, be mindful of your timing and only apply early in the morning before blooms open. Avoid spraying the flowers of the plants to help minimize exposure to toxins for adult bees and butterflies. Be mindful that any chemicals applied to plants can be consumed by hungry caterpillars.

Visit www.xerces.org for more information about pollinators and pollinator habitat.



3 Leave the Leaves

One of the most valuable things to support pollinators and other invertebrates is providing the winter cover they need in the form of fall leaves and standing dead plant material. Consider creating a sign to inform neighbors of your pollinator-friendly choices!

4 Re-Think Tillage

Just like raking leaves, tilling is an annual garden chore for most gardeners. It's what we have always done! However, tilling an area with hibernating pollinators could disturb or kill them. One of our most recognizable pollinators, the bumble bee, survives Washington's winter chill by burrowing only an inch or two into the ground. Winter is an especially vulnerable time for pollinators because it is too cold for them to be active. If you use tillage to reduce soil compaction, consider growing cover crops or only digging in exact planting areas.

5 Grow Cover Crops

Like leaves, winter cover crops of rye, vetch, and clover offer habitat and protection for the elements for pollinators. In the spring, flowering clover is an early source of nectar and cover crops prevent compaction, limiting the need for tilling. Make sure to refer to your soil test recommendations when making the decision to let cover crops flower. In the backyard garden, cover crops can be "chopped" with a spade or hand turned with less disruption to pollinator habitat than mechanical tillers.

