

# Gardening for Native Pollinators



*...it differs from traditional gardening*

## Plant Selection

Some native plants help declining pollinators better than others, because they have co-evolved over millennia.

**Choose an assortment of native plants that vary in color and shape and that collectively bloom all season long.**

Include native, early-blooming shrubs in your yard to give pollinators the best start when they emerge in spring.

**Make sure to choose straight species and not cultivars.**

Cultivars do not provide the necessary nutrients for pollinators. How can you tell if a plant is a cultivar? Cultivars typically have an additional pretty name in quotation marks after the Latin name.

**Do not purchase plants that have been treated with neonicotinoids.** The only way to know is to ask the nursery staff.



Carolina rose



White turtlehead



Butterfly milkweed



Pussy willow

For guidance, plant lists, and additional information, visit:  
[www.svtweb.org/gardens](http://www.svtweb.org/gardens)

## Maintenance

Pollinators need more than flowers.

**They also need shelter**, which they find in places you might not expect, such as holes in the ground, garden debris, and hollow stems.

To promote essential habitat for pollinators, **allow some areas of your garden to be less formal and a little “messy.”** Leave the leaves, don't remove dead stems, and don't clean up in the spring until after mid-May.

**Eliminate or reduce the use of pesticides.**



Dead wood



Hollow stems



Bare ground



Leaf litter



[www.svtweb.org/mca-nptf](http://www.svtweb.org/mca-nptf)

The NPTF seeks to conserve native pollination systems by providing specific habitat requirements and by reducing threats for at-risk pollinators in the 36 communities of the Metrowest Conservation Alliance (MCA).



[www.svtweb.org](http://www.svtweb.org)

Sudbury Valley Trustees is a nonprofit land trust that conserves natural areas and farmland in the 36 communities surrounding the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers. SVT is the coordinator for the MCA.

# Why Save Native Pollinators?

Plants need pollination to reproduce, and their successful pollination relies upon a group of animals known as “pollinators.”

While gathering nectar and pollen, insects transfer the male parts of one flower to the female parts of another of the same species. Then, a fertilized seed can grow into a new plant.

This process keeps the environment healthy. In Massachusetts, about 75% of flowering plants rely on animals for pollination. Imagine what missing 75% of our flowering plants would look like, and imagine how many birds, deer, and other animals use these plants as food and habitat.

Nature is like a web where everything is connected. If pollinators disappear, almost everything else will follow suit.

Despite the important service pollinators provide, they have not received the protection they deserve. Over the last two decades, pollinator populations have been dropping. The primary reason? Loss of habitat. The plants where insects eat, shelter, and lay their eggs have been crowded out by development and non-native invasive plants.

But all it takes to turn this trend around is a little yard space and some gardening tools.

Any garden has the potential to be a haven for declining pollinators like the golden northern and the half-black bumble bee.

The opposite side of this sheet offers tips for how you can turn your garden into healthy habitat for pollinators.

## **Honeybees Are Not Native Pollinators**

Honeybees, which are often used to pollinate agricultural crops, are not native to North America. They were imported from Europe and are not part of our environment’s natural web.

The job of pollinating the wild plants that sustain our natural environment falls to native bees and other native insects.

Some research has shown that honeybees can harm our native bees because they are aggressive and can spread diseases. Other research has shown that native bees can pollinate food crops more efficiently than honeybees.

The NPTF encourages you to take steps to help our native bees, many of which are declining in population.



Brown-Belted Bumble Bee  
(native)



Honey Bee  
(non native)

