

Why Native Plants?

Native plants are those indigenous to a particular region. They have adapted to the soils and climate of the region and have co-evolved with other species existing there.

Native plants are crucial to pollinators – they are what feed future generations! While ornamental flowering plants may provide some nectar to feed adult pollinators, native plants provide the food for young, future pollinators to become adults. For example, the Monarch butterfly will only lay eggs on its host plants – those of the milkweed species. Because that is all their young (caterpillars) can eat, without milkweed, none will grow to become the beautiful orange butterflies we enjoy each summer.

Native plants are able to support a greater variety of insect species than non-natives. For example, native oak trees can support over 500 different caterpillar species, while a non-native tree, like a ginkgo, can support only five!

The Audubon Society's Native Plant Database (audubon.org/native-plants) provides a list of native plants according to your ZIP code.

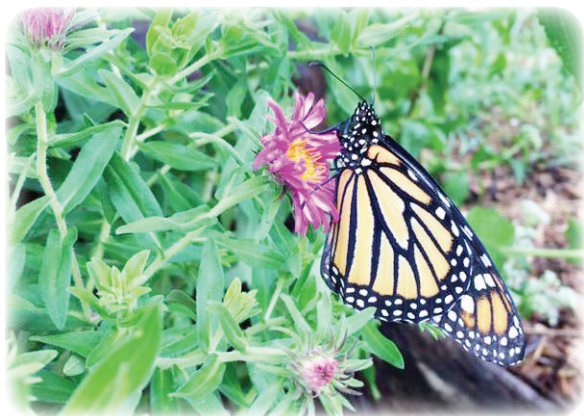


Photo: Andrea Halfhill

Monarch on New England Aster

Where Can I Buy Native Plants?

Check out the places below to buy pesticide-free plants locally:

- Friendship Farms – Latrobe
- Plant-It Earth Greenhouse – Homer City (also sells at Ligonier Country Market)
- Robison Acres Plant Sanctuary – Scenery Hill
- Arcadia Natives – Washington
- Audubon Society of Western PA Native Plant Nursery – Pittsburgh

Be sure to watch for area native plant sales – the Penn State Master Gardeners, Ohiopyle, Penguin Court (Brandywine Conservancy), and Phipps Conservatory host sales each spring.

Check out

www.westmorelandconservation.org
for links to additional resources to
learn more about pollinators!



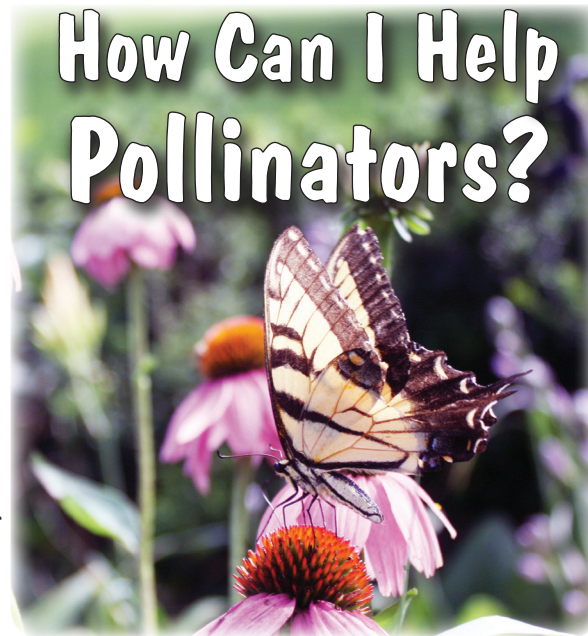
J. Roy Houston Conservation Center
218 Donohoe Road
Greensburg, PA 15601

724-837-5271



How Can I Help Pollinators?

Photo: Kathryn Hamilton



Where Would We Be Without Pollinators?

Pollinators include bees, hummingbirds, butterflies, moths and wasps to name a few. Pollinators visit flowers transporting pollen from one flower to another. About 75% of crops need pollinators to produce seed and fruit—including plants grown for food, fiber, oils, beverages, condiments, spices, medicines and more.

Pollinators help plants reproduce. In turn, plants produce clean air; provide food and cover for wildlife; help keep waterways clean by acting as filters; prevent erosion by holding soil in place; and reduce flooding impacts by absorbing runoff.

What Is Causing Pollinator Decline?

Pollinators are dying due to a combination of habitat loss, pesticide exposure and diseases, climate change, and impacts from invasive plant and animal species.

Heavily developed and paved areas, mowed lawns, and fields with no plant diversity cannot provide pollinators with enough food and habitat.

Pesticide exposure can kill pollinators outright or have lingering effects, such as shortening their lifespan, affecting their ability to gather food, and weakening their immune systems, making them vulnerable to diseases.

Climate change disrupts the relationships between plants and animals. For example, flowers may bloom earlier and by the time pollinators hatch, that particular food source is no longer available.

Invasive species have few if any natural predators, allowing them to take over an area, crowding out native plants. The photo below shows a non-native ivy species that has overtaken several native trees. The vines now prevent any benefits the trees once provided.



Photo: Andrea Halfhill

Invasive ivy growing on native trees

What Can I Do To Help?

Create a pollinator garden!



Photo: Andrea Halfhill

Monarch caterpillars on Butterfly Weed (milkweed)

- First, look at the outdoor space you have and determine whether any of it can be turned into pollinator habitat – Is there a portion of your lawn that you do not use? What about that wet spot that your lawn mower gets stuck in? There's a native plant perfectly suited for that space!
- If you do not have a yard, you can create pollinator habitat by planting in containers on a balcony or patio – even a few of the right plants can provide food for hungry pollinators!
- Choose mostly native plants. Add a variety of flower colors and shapes to attract different pollinators. Pick plants with different bloom times in order to provide food from spring through fall.
- While not native, some herbs can benefit pollinators. Eastern black swallowtail butterflies, for example, will often lay eggs on parsley, fennel and dill. These plants are related to their native host plants and will feed hatching caterpillars.

- Avoid planting invasive species. See the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources website (www.dcnr.pa.gov) for a list.
- When planting, group the same plants together (three or more is recommended).
- Add different layers of plants – trees, shrubs, vines, perennials and annuals – to provide both food and shelter.
- When buying plants or seeds, ask if nurseries use pesticides. These are dangerous to insects. Treated plants can kill feeding caterpillars.
- Pull by hand or dig rather than use chemicals to remove undesirable weeds.
- Live with a little “mess” in your yard. Leave areas of bare soil for ground-nesting pollinators – 70% of native bees nest in the ground. In the fall, let leaves remain on the ground (or rake into small piles) to shelter overwintering caterpillars and cocoons. Then, wait until spring to clean up your garden – many insects nest in hollow stems of dead vegetation during winter. Keep dead snags or small branch piles as nesting sites.



Photo: Chelsea Walker

Bumblebees on sunflower