



Pollinator Garden Plant Suggestions - Perennials Heart of Uwchlan Project

Tips for Planting a Pollinator Garden

- Assess your location. Is it dry? Often wet? Is soil clay or loamy? How much sun or shade? Select plants appropriate to the conditions: “Right plant in the right place.”
- Plant so you have blooms in every season. Don’t forget late summer/autumn bloomers; migrating butterflies need that late season pollen and nectar.
- Plant for a variety of flower color and shape. That’s prettier for you, but it also appeals to a variety of pollinators. Some bees and butterflies prefer specific plants.
- Plant in groups of at least three . . . easier for pollinators to find and browse.
- Don’t forget the birds. Plant tubular flowers for hummingbirds, bushes with berries for birds (see related Plant List for Shrubs).
- Finally, do minimal cleanup in the fall. Leave the leaves, dead stems and flower heads. Beneficial insects like miner bees lay eggs in hollow stems, finches will eat the echinacea seeds. Many butterflies and moths overwinter as pupae in dead leaves.

Spring Blooming

Golden-ragwort (*Packera aurea*) – mid to late Spring – Damp location, shade



Grows freely and naturalizes into large colonies. Yellow flower heads, **blooms for over 3 weeks in mid- to late spring. Dense ground cover.** Prefers partial sun, medium shade. **Prefers moist, swampy conditions.** Cut back bloom stalks after flowering.

Golden Alexander (*Zizia aurea*) – blooms May-June – prefers wet habitats but will tolerate dry



Attractive bright yellow **flower** which occurs from May – June, looks like dill in shape. An excellent addition to a wildflower garden because it provides accessible nectar to many beneficial insects with short mouthparts during the spring and early summer when such flowers are relatively uncommon. It can tolerate dry summers even though it prefers wet habitats.

Woodland Blue Star (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*) – May-June



Amsonias, or **bluestars**, are perennial wildflowers found in wooded areas and on river banks from New Jersey to Tennessee to Texas, and they are popular garden plants as well. Blooming in May and June, each flower has five pale **blue** flower petals and blooms in clusters on two- to three-foot stems. There are several regional species. Blue Dogbane, Eastern Bluestar, Willow Amsonia, Woodland Blue Star (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*) has wider leaves and pale blue flowers.

Summer Blooming

Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) – June-July, Sun, Damp Location



Monarch host plant. Unlike common milkweed, leaves are narrow, tapering. Pink flowers. Narrow pods. Wet pollinator gardens, rain gardens, pond edges, and monarch habitat plantings. Likes wet to medium soil. Can be extremely successful in damp ground. Lots of monarch caterpillars on it. Bright pink flowers. Can get tall (3-4').

Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) – June-August, Sun, Dry Location



Butterfly weed plants are trouble-free North American natives in the milkweed family that produce flat clusters of bright orange blossoms all summer long. Nectar- and pollen-rich flowers attract hummingbirds and hordes of butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects throughout the blooming season. It is also a **food plant for monarch caterpillars**. It is about one to two feet tall, with glossy, lanceolate leaves that are arranged spirally up the length of the stem. The seed pods turn brown over time and are nice for adding winter interest to the garden.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED with Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*), a fast-growing, deciduous shrub with spiked trusses that bloom from summer to autumn. While Butterfly Bush attracts butterflies, its pollen is inferior and the birds carry seeds, making it invasive.

Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) – June-August – Dry Soil, Sun



Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) is a native perennial whose main virtue is its appeal to butterflies—especially the monarch, which deposits its eggs on the milkweed. When the caterpillars hatch, they feed on the leaves of milkweed. Common milkweed plants grow to about two to four feet in height, with a thin, vertical growth habit. The long, oblong leaves are light green and grow to about eight inches long. The stems and leaves bleed a milky sap when cut, which gives the plant its name. In late spring to mid-summer, fragrant clusters of pink-purple flowers appear. The flowers produce warty seed pods two to four inches long that split when ripe to cast many fine seeds to the wind.

Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*) – July-September - Sun



Whorled milkweed is an excellent host plant for monarch caterpillars that blooms later than other milkweed. Clone forming and only one to two feet tall, it forms attractive drifts of plants. Narrow three to four-inch pods form in late summer as the leaves turn to yellow and orange providing interest well into autumn.

Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) – July-September – Damp Location



Striking spikes of bright red tubular flowers in late summer – **attracts hummingbirds. Like wet soil.** Allow to self reseed in soil with no cover; seeds extremely small. May be basal rosette first year. Can take two years to grow from seed. Wonderful accent!

Mountain-mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*) – July-September – Moist to Average



Can be aggressive and will spread like most mints; flowers are not too showy but unmatched in attracting native bees, wasps, and other pollinators. Blooms **July-September**. Prefers moist to average soils, but **tolerant of poor soils**. Very good at stabilizing soil on eroding slopes and disturbed sites, **good for urban restoration**.

(Bergamot) *Monarda fistulosa* and Beebalm (*Monarda didyma*) – June-August – Sun-Shade – Medium-Moist



Bergamot is a wide-ranging North American plant that thrives in all but the wettest soils. The lavender tubular flowers are a very popular nectar source, attracting a wide variety of bees and butterflies. Hummingbirds may also visit. A member of the mint family, Bergamot was historically used by indigenous people for a variety of medicinal applications. The distinctly aromatic leaves are commonly used to make tea. The button seedheads are popular in dried floral arrangements. A pollinator favorite, **Beebalm's** red bloom makes it especially

attractive to hummingbirds. One of only a few red-flowered natives, it holds a special place in the mid-summer color scheme. Native to the Appalachian Mountains, *Monarda didyma* will grow well in zones 4 - 7. Does best in a rich soil with a good organic matter content to provide moisture during the heat of summer. Also known as Oswego Tea, American Beebalm or Scarlet Beebalm.

Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea) – July-September – Sun – Dry-Medium



This very popular native plant blooms profusely for up to two months in mid to late summer and sometimes will re-bloom in the fall. The showy flowers are a favorite nectar source for butterflies, bees and myriad pollinators, including hummingbirds. Later in summer the large seedheads attract goldfinches and other birds. Easy to grow, Purple Coneflower prefers full to partial sun and medium soil conditions. Growth is best in fertile loam, but it will tolerate clay or dryer conditions. It is somewhat drought resistant, but the entire plant may wilt if the soil becomes too dry in strong sunlight. Today, *Echinacea purpurea* is uncommon in the wild, but is readily available commercially, and the seed is often used in land restoration. *Echinacea* species were used by Native Americans for medicinal purposes and are still used today in herbal medicine and tea.

Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta) – Summer – Average Soil, Sun



A North American flowering plant in the sunflower family, native to Eastern and Central North America and naturalized in the Western part of the continent as well as in China. Often used for summer color in gardens.

Brown-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia triloba) – Summer – Sun – Moist Soil



Rudbeckia triloba (browneyed susan, brown-eyed susan, thin-leaved coneflower, three-leaved coneflower) is a species of flowering plant in the sunflower family native to the United States. It is often seen in old fields or along roadsides and is often included in meadow seed mixes to help establish the meadow. It is also cultivated as an ornamental. It is a short-lived herbaceous perennial. Height is 2–3 ft (60–90 cm) with a spread of 1.0 to 1.5 ft (30 to 45 cm). The species requires full sun and moist soil. *Triloba* refers to the three-lobed leaf.

Cup Plant (Silphium perfoliatum) – Summer – Sun – Moist Soil



A species of flowering plant in the family Asteraceae, native to eastern and central North America. It is an erect herbaceous perennial with triangular toothed leaves, and daisy-like yellow composite flower heads in summer. Cup Plant grows in sandy moist bottom lands, floodplains, near stream beds, in or adjacent to open woodland. The specific epithet *perfoliatum* means "through the leaf," as the leaf wraps the stem to form the "cup." It grows very tall, as much as 10 feet.

Ox-eye Sunflower (*Heliopsis helianthoides*) – June-September – Sun – Dry-Moist



A relative of the sunflowers, *Heliopsis helianthoides* produces a profusion of bright yellow flowers in early to mid-summer. Excellent for problem clay soils, it grows in any reasonably fertile soil and thrives in moist, heavy soils. Ox Eye Sunflower does not spread by rhizomes, but it will self-sow readily, on open soil.

Culver's Root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*) – July-August – Suns - Medium-Moist



This stately specimen is prized for its well-defined, clean lines. Elegant spires of white flowers crown the whorls of deep green leaves. Culver's Root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*) creates a unique vertical accent and can be combined with other white flowers to create 'white gardens' and Moon Gardens.

Lavender Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*) – July-September – Sun – Dry-Medium



The crushed leaves of Lavender Hyssop, also known as Anise Hyssop, have a fragrance of mint and licorice. The bright purple flowers and textured foliage make this an excellent choice for sunny prairies, open oak woodlands, and savannas. This pollinator favorite and butterfly magnet is an excellent addition in herb gardens, borders and perennial gardens. *Agastache foeniculum* is biennial, and self-sows readily on open soil.

Autumn Blooming

Great Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*) – August through Fall, Wet Soil



Covered in deep blue flowers in late summer and early fall, Great Blue Lobelia can form colonies of flowered spikes in medium to wet soils, especially with a little shade. Longer lived than the Cardinal Flower, it also attracts hummingbirds. Can spread and fill in, forming attractive colonies.

Obedient Plant (*Physostegia virginiana*) – August-September – Sun – Medium-Moist



A great groundcover for damp soils. This showy member of the mint family thrives in moist soil and creeps rapidly by rhizomes to keep weeds at bay. An excellent groundcover for wet areas that are difficult to mow, plant it with Great Blue Lobelia and Ironweed for great late summer color.

White Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*) and Pink Turtlehead (*C. lyonii*) – Late Summer – Moist Soil



Tolerant of clay and wet conditions, likes a woodland setting. Mass plantings tend to flop. Best mixed in with similar wet loving, non-aggressive plants like Swamp Milkweed. Name refers to the shape of flower, like head of a turtle.

Joe-Pye-weed (*Eutrochium dubium* ‘Little Joe’) – August-September – Wet Soil



Multiple flower heads, cloudlike. A good support of wildlife; very attractive to butterflies and other pollinators. Seeds are attractive to birds, i.e. American goldfinches. Hollow stems used by hibernating insects, so let the dry stems stay in the garden over winter. Wet-loving. Can get tall (3’-5’)

Giant Ironweed (*Vernonia gigantea*); (also *V. glauca*, *V. angustifolia*) – Late Summer to Early Fall – Wet to Average Soil



An excellent addition to the pollinator garden, **Ironweed** is a host plant for the American **Painted Lady butterfly**. Although it grows naturally in moist soils, and tolerates brief flooding, it adaptable to wide variety of soils, from heavy clay to sandy loam and does equally well in average garden soils. It grows taller in moist soils. Vibrant magenta flower heads in late summer to early fall. Cut back by 2/3 in late May to promote branching, shorter stockier plant.

New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*) (syn. *Aster novae-angliae*) – Late Summer to Fall – Average Soil



New England aster is a native, upright perennial with purple or pinkish daisy-like flowers that bloom in **late summer** and autumn. Excellent in combination with other late season ornamental grasses, goldenrod and other asters. This plant is known for attracting butterflies. This plant has some cultivated varieties

Smooth Aster (*Aster laevis*) – August-October – Sun – Dry-Medium Soil



This fabulous aster produces a profusion of lavender-blue, star-like flowers in late autumn. Extremely hardy, Smooth Aster defies frosts and keeps on blooming often into November. The attractive flowers have yellow centers which turn reddish later in the season. The numerous blooms, at the end of the multiple branching stems, are each around 1.25" across. The leaves on Smooth Aster are smooth to the touch which makes this species different from most asters.

Attractive to butterflies seeking nectar in the fall, it is also a larval host for the Pearl Crescent (*Phyciodes tharos*) butterfly. Other names include: *Symphotrichum laeve*, Smooth Blue Aster, Smooth American Aster. This

Aster occurs naturally in open woods, dry to mesic prairies, man-made or disturbed habitats, meadows and fields.

Meadow Blazing Star (*Liatris ligulistylus*) – August-September – Sun – Medium Soil



The ultimate Monarch magnet, this liatris is top-of-the-list as a nectar source for Monarch butterflies on any medium-soil site. Swallowtails, Sulphurs, Hairstreaks, Fritillaries, Painted Lady, Red Admiral – are also likely to visit this plant along with hummingbirds and other pollinators. The seeds are popular with Goldfinches.

Liatris ligulistylus lends a vertical accent to perennial borders. It can grow up to 5' tall when planted in rich soils, in which case you may want to stake the plants, depending on how they are situated among other plants. It is somewhat tolerant of poorer dry soils, where it's height will be at the shorter end of its range. It also tolerates summer heat and humidity, but avoid planting it in soils

that stay moist/wet in the winter. Other names include Rocky Mountain Blazingstar, Rocky Mountain Gayfeather, Rocky Mountain Liatris, Meadow Gayfeather and Northern Plains Blazingstar.

Goldenrods



Goldenrods are an important fall nectar source for many pollinators including the Monarch butterfly, so it is unfortunate that these fall blooming natives are mistakenly blamed for hay fever. The pollen of Goldenrods is transported by insects. The pollen is not airborne does not cause pollen related allergies. Goldenrods are a critical habitat species in the fall landscape. Include them in the garden and landscape for their important ecosystem services as well as their glowing beauty!

Showy Goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*) – Late Summer-Fall – Dry Soil, Sun

The flower spikes of Showy Goldenrod create a spectacular show from late summer through early fall. The foot long golden wands add a distinctive flourish to the autumn landscape. *Solidago speciosa* is an important late season nectar source for butterflies and other pollinators. Deer Resistant.

Anise Scented Goldenrod (*Solidago odora*) – Late Summer-Fall – Partial Shade - Dry



Native to dry open woods of the eastern U.S. and central Midwest, *Solidago odora* is an excellent choice in dry shade. Named for the licorice fragrance given off by the leaves when crushed, the dense spires of golden-yellow flowers provide a burst of late season color.

Stiff Goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*) – Late Summer-Fall – Most Soils - Dry-Medium



A Monarch favorite, Stiff Goldenrod is widely adaptable. It thrives in the most inhospitable soils from clay to dry sand, in a broad range of conditions. The stems serve as perches for songbirds, and the seeds are an important late season bird food. *Solidago rigida* self-seeds readily, and removal of the seed heads may be needed in smaller settings as a way to control unwanted seedlings.