

Brookside Nature Center

Bee, Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden

You can help flower pollinators by creating a butterfly garden and growing nectar flowers for butterflies, bees and even hummingbirds. A butterfly garden also gives you the opportunity to see these colorful insects and birds up-close.

Our local bee and butterfly species are adapted to drinking nectar from the native plants listed below.

Native Nectar Plants

Flowers

Butterfly Weed – *Asclepias tuberosa*
Swamp Milkweed – *Asclepias incarnata*
Common Milkweed – *Asclepias syriaca*
Wild Bergamot – *Monarda fistulosa*
Purple Coneflower – *Echinacea purpurea*
New England Aster – *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*
Cardinal Flower – *Lobelia cardinalis*
Great Lobelia – *Lobelia siphilitica*

Goldenrod – *Solidago spp.*

Dogbane or Indian Hemp – *Apocynum cannabinum*

Joe Pye Weed – *Eupatorium spp.*

New York Ironweed – *Vernonia novaboracensis*

Mountain Mint – *Pycnanthemum spp.*

Shrubs

Buttonbush – *Cephalanthus occidentalis*

Sweet Pepperbush – *Clethra alnifolia*

A female butterfly lays eggs on “host plants” that will feed her young. Some butterflies are host-specific, feeding on only one family or genus of plants, while others are generalists using several different species of plants as their hosts.

Native Host Plants for Caterpillars

Flowers

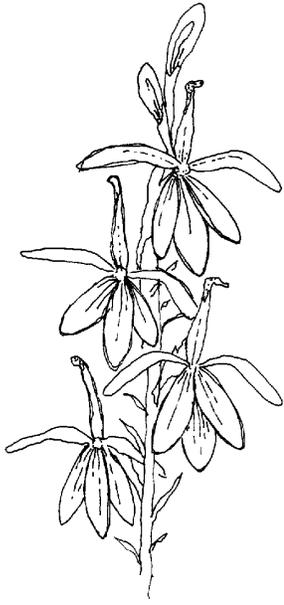
Milkweeds – *Asclepias spp.*
Violets – *Viola spp.*
Asters – *Aster spp.*
White Turtlehead – *Chelone glabra*
Pearly Everlasting – *Anaphalis margaritacea*
Pussytoes – *Antennaria spp.*
Dutchman’s Pipevine – *Aristolochia durior*

Shrubs

Spicebush – *Lindera benzoin*
Sumacs – *Rhus spp.*

Trees

Wild Cherry – *Prunus serotina*
Pawpaw – *Asimina triloba*
Oaks – *Quercus spp.*



Cardinal Flower

The Ruby-throated hummingbird is the only regularly occurring hummingbird in the eastern United States. Ruby-throats need a steady supply of nectar to keep up with their high metabolism. They are attracted to red, orange, pink and yellow tubular flowers, for which their long bills are uniquely adapted. To attract and feed hummingbirds, try growing Trumpet Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) or Trumpet Creeper (*Campsis radicans*) vines, Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*), Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), Red Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) or Scarlet Sage (*Salvia splendens*).

The Plant-Pollinator Partnership

Plants have a dilemma: they need to get their flower pollen to neighboring flowers, but they are rooted to the ground. Without this pollen exchange, flowers won't turn into seeds to make more plants. What's the solution? Insects move the pollen for them! Bees, butterflies and other insects get dusted with pollen when they brush against flower parts to reach the nectar they eat. Then as the insects fly from flower to flower looking for more food, the pollen falls off them and the plant is pollinated. Bees are one of the most efficient pollinators, and some even have special body parts for carrying pollen.

Pollinators aren't the only ones to get a meal out of their plant partnerships. The fruits and seeds that result from pollination provide food for birds and other wildlife, as well as people. In fact, you can thank pollinators for apples, cherries, watermelons, almonds, pumpkins, peaches, and lots more!

Tips for Attracting Pollinators to Your Yard

- **Use local native plants.** Research suggests native plants are four times more attractive to native bees than exotic flowers.
- **Choose flowers with different colors, shapes and sizes.** Plants of varying color, size and shape will accommodate a greater diversity of pollinating insects.
- **Plant flowers in clumps.** Flowers clustered into clumps of one species will attract more pollinators than individual scattered plants. Where space allows, make the clumps four feet or more in diameter.
- **Have a diversity of plants flowering all season.** By having several plant species flowering at once, and a sequence of plants flowering through spring, summer and fall, you can support a range of species that fly at different times of the year.
- **Select a sunny and sheltered garden site.** Adult butterflies need to be warm in order to fly. Nectar flowers should be grown in an open, sunny area that is protected from the wind by large shrubs, a hedgerow, a fence, or some other windbreak.
- **Do not use insecticides in your garden.** Alternative methods for controlling specific garden pests without using chemicals are available.

Text adapted from the fact sheets "Butterfly Gardening" and "Plants for Native Bees" by the Xerces Society at www.xerces.org