

Wings In The Garden: Plants that Attract Pollinators and Wildlife to your Garden

As you wander about your garden, watch where the butterflies, bees, beetles and other insects gather. Is it on native or non-native plants? If insects do not find the plants they need to survive in your garden, will birds and other insect eating creatures come there to nest and live? No!! The primary source of food for insects in our gardens is native plants. Although some insects do eat the nectar of non-natives, almost none lay their eggs on non-native plants, nor are non-natives a host plant for their larvae.

Almost all birds depend on nutritious insects as a food source, and insects are the primary food source for their young. Without an adequate supply of larvae and other insects to eat and to feed their babies, birds look elsewhere. With this source of food they will nest, reproduce and increase in number, right in your garden! As your number of native plants increases, so will your insect and bird population.

Just as insects need plants to survive, plants need insects as well. Insects are important to most plants, native or alien, as pollinators. Although some pollination is self pollination and cross pollination, or pollination by wind, hummingbirds and bats, by far the best pollinators are winged insects such as bees, wasps, moths, butterflies and flies. The shape, color and smell of flowers are attractions to different insects, so it is important to have a diverse variety of plants in order to attract many different insects to pollinate.

Diversity in our gardens is essential because our ecosystem is integrated, and all species are necessary in order to keep it healthy. To survive, a diverse population of animals must have a diverse population of plants that are their primary source of energy. How can we meet species' ecological needs in order to maintain the biodiversity our planet needs to survive? This is a tall order, but there are things that each of us can do! A giant step in this direction is to *make sure our gardens are planted with a diverse variety of native plants.*

Much has been written about butterfly gardens, but here we hope to broaden the scope of *wings in the garden* by suggesting ways to attract other insects and birds as well. In addition to these many winged creatures we will discuss using native plants to attract mammals, also. We've researched and found a variety of plants which you may find appropriate for a garden in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 4, 5 and 6. Try a few and see if you have more *wings in your garden!*

Louisa Birch, 2013

Attracting Wildlife with Native Perennials

Insects, birds and mammals in USDA Plant Hardiness zones 4, 5 and 6 are attracted to the native perennials listed below. The *genus* of the plant is given, and you may choose the *species* that best fits your garden. Try grouping several different plants together. A mass of native perennials preferred by a variety of wildlife will guarantee a plethora of butterflies, bees, birds and mammals in your garden. Make sure to have a nearby source of water, and if you're fortunate enough to have a brook or stream running through your garden, make the most of it.

***Agastache* - Wild Hyssop**

***Helianthus* – Sunflower**

***Amsonia* - Bluestar**

***Hydrastis* – Goldenseal**

***Antennaria* – Pussy-toes, Everlasting**

***Liatris* - Blazing Star**

***Aquilegia* – Columbine**

***Lobelia* – Cardinal Flower**

***Aruncus* – Goat's Beard**

Lupinus – Lupine

***Asclepias* – Milkweed**

***Maianthemum* - Canada Mayflower, Deerberry**

Aster

***Monarda* – Bee Balm, Wild Bergamot**

***Astragalus* – Milkvetch**

***Panax* – Ginseng**

***Baptisia* – Wild Indigo**

***Penstemon* – Beardtongue**

***Chelone* – Turtlehead**

***Podophyllum* – Mayapple**

***Cimicifuga* - Bugbane, Black Cohosh**

***Rudbeckia*– Black Eyed Susan**

***Clintonia* - Bluebeard Lily**

***Silphium* – Rosin Weed**

Cornus – Bunchberry

***Smilacina* – False Solomon's Seal**

***Dicentra* – Bleeding Heart**

***Solidago* – Goldenrod**

***Diphylleia* – Umbrella Leaf**

***Spigelia* – Indian Pink, Pinkroot, Worm Grass**

***Echinacea* – Coneflower**

***Streptopus* - Twisted Stalk**

***Epigaea* – Trailing Arbutus, Mayflower**

***Zizia* – Golden Alexanders**

***Eupatorium* – Joe-Pye weed, Boneset, Wild Ageratum, White Snakeroot**

***Gaultheria* - Wintergreen, Checkerberry**

***Gentiana* – Gentian**

Attracting Wildlife with Native Trees and Shrubs

Native trees and shrubs attract a great variety wildlife to the garden. Insects lay their eggs on their leaves, and bees, butterflies and hummingbirds drink the sweet nectar from their blossoms. Those with nuts or berries offer forage for both birds and animals in the fall. Trees and thick groupings of shrubs offer places for birds to build nests, and shelter for small critters to hide in and to spend the winter. Below is a list of native trees and shrubs which attract wildlife to gardens and landscapes in the USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 4, 5 and 6.

***Acer* – Maple**

***Malus* – Crabapple**

***Amelanchier* – Serviceberry or Shadbush**

***Ostrya virginiana* – Ironwood, Hornbeam**

***Arctostaphylos* – Bearberry**

***Parthenocissus quinquefolia* -Virginia creeper**

***Aronia* – Chokeberry**

***Physocarpus* – Ninebark**

***Artemisia* – Sagebrush**

***Picea* – Spruce**

***Betula* – Birch**

***Pinus* – Pine**

***Celastrus scandens* - American Bittersweet** ***Populus* – Poplar, Aspen**

***Cephalanthus* – Buttonbush**

***Potentilla fruticosa* – Shrubby cinquefoil**

***Chamaedaphne* – Leatherleaf**

***Prunus* – Plum, Cherry**

***Clethra* – Summersweet**

***Quercus* – Oak**

***Cornus* – Dogwood**

***Rhus* – Sumac**

***Crataegus* - Hawthorn**

***Rosa* – Rose**

***Diervilla* – Bush Honeysuckle**

***Rubus* – Bramble**

***Fagus grandifolia*- American Beech**

***Sassafras albidum* - Sassafras**

***Fothergilla* – Witch-alder**

***Sorbus* – Mountain-ash**

***Fraxinus* – Ash**

***Spiraea* – Meadowsweet**

***Gaylussacia* – Huckleberry**

***Taxus* – Yew**

***Ilex* – Holly**

***Tsuga* – Hemlock**

***Lindera benzoin* – Spicebush**

***Vaccinium* – Blueberry**

Viburnum

Natural Pest Control

There are a variety of natural pest controls, and you may well have them all in your garden! Insects such as lady bugs, parasitic wasps and lace wings offer excellent natural control for fleas, beetles, grasshopper eggs, caterpillars and aphid infestations. These insects are attracted by having many composites in your garden such as asters, black-eyed Susan and goldenrod. Sweet nectar attracts ants who chase away other insects as they sip nectar.

Bats, who can eat hundreds of insects in one night, are very helpful in keeping the insect population under control.

Insect eating birds are by far the best natural pest control, and most birds eat insects. Even those who prefer nectar, seeds or berries, feed their young with insects. This is done in the breeding season in the spring and early summer when insects are most plentiful. Filling your garden with natural bird food such as berries and seed producing plants, giving them fresh water, good nesting opportunities, and adequate cover all encourage birds to return year after year.

Here is a list of some of the birds that are especially helpful in controlling insects often found in the garden.

Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*)

Northern Cardinals (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

Chipping Sparrows (*Spizella passerine*)

Many Woodpeckers (*Picidae*) and Flickers (*Colaptes*)

Evening Grosbeaks (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*)

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)

White and Red Nuthatches (*Sitta carolinensis* and *S. Canadensis*)

Purple Martin and Tree Swallows (*Progne subis* and *Tachycineta bicolor*)

Eastern Phoebe and Baltimore Orioles: (*Sayornis phoebe* and *Icterus galbula*) Red Eyed Vireos (*Vireo olivaceus*)

Tufted Titmice (*Baeolophus bicolor*)

Whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus vociferous*)

Yellow and Yellow-rumped Warblers and Redstarts (*Dendroica petechia* and *D. coronata* and *Setophaga ruticilla*)

Bibliography

The easiest way to find information on a specific plant or insect is to run an internet search using the plant name.

Web Sites:

New England Wild Flower Society: www.newfs.org

NH Department of Agriculture: <http://agriculture.nh.gov>

Plant Native: www.plantnative.org

The Nature Conservancy: <http://nature.org>

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/greenacres/

Books:

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