

Native Plant Pollinator Gardens Frequently Asked Questions

Protecting Our Pollinators One Garden at a Time

Why are pollinators important?

In addition to fertilizing crops for humans and domestic animals, pollinators provide another essential function in the food web. They are a major food source for many birds and other wildlife who rely on pollinators for themselves or their babies. As such, pollinators play a foundational and vital role in the ecosystem.

Why are native plant pollinator gardens important?

Unfortunately, many insect species, including our native pollinators, have significantly declined in recent decades. There are many reasons for this, but loss of habitat and especially loss of the native plants they need to reproduce are significant reasons. Individual pollinator gardens can help! They provide both food and places to live and overwinter. The flowers we enjoy also provide pollen and nectar for pollinators. Even more beneficial is when the gardens include native host plants to support the complete lifecycle of some of the pollinators. Many know about the milkweed / monarch connection but other butterflies also depend on specific plants for their lifecycle.

I enjoy supporting birds in my yard and garden.

Wonderful! Birds are so important. And, by supporting pollinators, you are also supporting birds. Because caterpillars are a major food source for baby birds, the ecosystem including the bird population becomes more robust when there are plenty of native plants around, especially trees and shrubs. According to well-known entomologist Dr. Doug Tallamy, more than 7,500 caterpillars are required to raise just one clutch of chickadees. See the link below.

Are Pollinators and Bees the Same Thing?

Bees are likely the best pollinators, as they are the hairiest and, therefore, most effective at transporting pollen from one flower to another. However, some experts now believe that moths may be second best because there are so many of them (estimated at 11,000 species in North America compared to 800 butterfly species!). In Southern Oregon, native pollinators include native bees, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, wasps, bats, and hummingbirds.

Why should I have native plants in my pollinator garden?

Pollinators and plants have co-evolved, such that many butterflies can lay their eggs only on the plants they co-evolved with, and some bees can only eat pollen from certain flowers. If there are not enough native plants, the ecosystem loses a necessary part of the food web.



How are pollinator neighborhoods (corridors or buzzways) helpful?

By creating pollinator corridors (“Buzzways”) we also creating connectivity. This means pollinators can find food and host plants, without crossing large, often inhospitable spaces that don’t have what they need. Neighborhood pollinator gardens create smaller corridors and connect to the Rogue Buzzway that stretches from the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument to Grants Pass, creating even more connectivity for pollinators and other wildlife.

I’m concerned about fire risks. Are any native plants helpful with fire safety?

Some native plants can be fire-resistant, or fire-reluctant. Individuals and neighborhoods can share resources for selecting plants that are good for fire safety, neighborhoods, and the ecosystem.

Can I get help with creating a pollinator garden?

Yes. Pollinator Project Rogue Valley is here to provide many resources, from education and support to selling the actual plants and seeds. You may wish to visit their native plant demonstration garden at their office in Phoenix. Visit PPRV online at www.pollinatorprojectroguvalley.org to learn more. Additionally, as a community, we can support each other, sharing ideas, plants, seeds etc.

Can I keep my favorite non-native plants and still have a native plant pollinator garden?

Absolutely. While every native plant helps pollinators and the ecosystem, it’s also important that gardens are satisfying to the humans who live in and love them. This can include a mix of natives as well as cultivars. We can each find the balance that works for us. Additionally, many people find that, over time, they come to appreciate the beauty of native plants in a new way.

What if I’m not yet ready to create a native plant pollinator garden?

There are many ways to support pollinators. Some pollinator-friendly tips that don't involve creating a new garden are: leave fallen leaves which often serve as "nurseries" for insects that overwinter in the leaves; don't trim back plants too much in the fall -- the standing dead matter also provides shelter for insects overwintering (I see praying mantis egg cases on my spent grasses all the time) and actually helps protect the plant itself from winter cold; leave bare soil and/or dead trees/limbs, which are also critical nesting sites for bees and other insects.

For more ideas on making a pollinator-friendly native plant garden:

- www.gardendesign.com/landscape-design/pollinator-garden.html
- www.nytimes.com/2015/03/11/opinion/in-your-garden-choose-plants-that-help-the-environment.html
- www.pollinatorprojectroguvalley.org/protect-pollinators

