

Wildlife Conservation in The Garden

Here's a scary thought: declining populations of pollinators is putting the existence of certain plants in jeopardy. In the U.S., the list of endangered pollinators includes two types of insects, four kinds of bats, 16 different birds, and 25 butterfly, skipper and moth species. You and I can do something about it! This year, plant a garden that has wildlife conservation in mind.

I came across a fantastic book, *Gardening for Wildlife: A Complete Guide To Nature-Friendly Gardening*. Author Adrian Thomas has put together beautifully-photographed and informative pages that send a very hopeful message: no matter what the size of your property, you can make a positive contribution to the global environment. It's worth a read, but here are a few short points to help you plan your garden:

- To keep birds happy, you need to work on boosting the beetle, aphid, and caterpillar populations in your garden.
- Gardening for butterflies means filling sunny spots in your garden with particular nectar flowers and caterpillar food plants.
- Bumblebees will need a good supply of nectar and pollen throughout the entire growing season.
- A variety of trees, shrubs and mulches on your property will be very inviting to beetles.
- Attract dragonflies, damsels, and bats by digging a pond where insects will linger.

Nobody said it was going to be easy! You can't necessarily attract pollinators to your garden, but you can be the perfect host to existing wildlife and others passing by, so they never want to leave. The list of plant possibilities is endless, but here are some no-fuss ideas to get you started on your wildlife conservation project.

Coneflowers



These nectar-rich, flowering stems will come back year after year, and so will the bumblebees, butterflies and moths. They are deer-resistant (the kind of wildlife you don't want in your garden), sun and drought-tolerant, and most-commonly come in shades of lavender, pink and purple. Coneflowers usually start blooming in early to mid-summer, and after a quick reset will bloom again through the frost. Most varieties will do well in zones 3-9.

Nasturtiums



Want more butterflies in your garden? Then the most important thing you need to give them is food for their caterpillars, and nasturtiums are a really good start. Caterpillars love their bright green leaves, which grow quickly, abundantly, and easily. Their flowers are often rich shades of yellow, orange and red. This annual grows best in full sun to partial shade and blooms from early summer through fall in cooler climates. At the end of the summer, save their seeds for next

season's crop.



Lavender

This low-growing shrub is the whole package: it flowers from June to August and will keep the bumblebees, Honeybees, butterflies and hummingbirds coming all summer long. Lavender loves hot, dry places, and most varieties are hardy in zones 5-9. If you'd like this fragrant plant to do really well, consider planting it in containers so it can follow the sun wherever it goes. Its root system actually prefers tight spaces, making it a perfect choice for city-dwellers looking to increase wildlife populations.



Daffodils

This springtime-favorite is also a perfect host for pollen beetles, which you'll find if you peel back the trumpet flower head and look inside. These perennials need cool weather to bloom, which is why they're usually the first colorful flowers to officially kick-off the gardening season. Daffodils are extremely hardy, doing well in zones 3-8. Don't forget; the more beetles you have in your garden, the more likely other pollinators, like birds, are to stick around.



Wisteria

If you've got an arbor or any kind of trellis work in your garden, consider planting wisterias. Their stems will climb up walls and over arches in no time at all. From mid-spring to early summer, stunning blooms of bluish-purple or lavender are loved by bumblebees and Honeybees alike. Even better, they're *disliked* by deer and rabbits. Wisterias' trunk-like branches are the perfect spot for birds like Robins, Spotted Flycatchers and Blackbirds to build their nests. They love full sun and do well in zones 5-8.