

# Support Your Local Pollinators



June is [National Pollinator Month](#), with [National Pollinator Week](#) the 17th-23rd this year, so this is a great time to work things into your garden for your insect and bird helpers.

Attracting pollinators is important for a couple of reasons: on the small scale you need them if you want to get fruit or viable seeds from your plants later, and on the larger scale, they're vital for keeping plants going throughout the ecosystem, and every container garden, landscaped yard, and big farm that attends to the needs of pollinators helps support all of us.

Bees and butterflies are some of the most well-known of the insect pollinators, but wasps, flies, and beetles are among other 6-legged fans of flowers. Many species of wasps and flies that visit flowers as adults have another benefit in the garden: in their larval form they love eating other insects, which often means aphids and other plant pests. Hover flies, also known as flower flies, are a great example. Many of these flies are striped like bees, but the only threat they pose is to aphids.

Native plants are an obvious choice for supporting native pollinators: our local insects and birds evolved along with these plants, and many insects are dependent upon specific species as food in their youth. The USDA recommends "planting at least three different pollinator plants within each of three blooming periods (i.e. early, mid or late season; or early spring, spring, and summer - refer to Tables below) for a total of at least nine different pollinator plants to include in your planting design" (from "[Oregon Plants for Pollinators](#)," a detailed guide to creating habitat for pollinators). They also recommend including at least one native bunchgrass, as an important food source for larva of many beneficial insects, for a total of 10 species of plants.

Many other flowering plants are also good sources of sugar and protein (nectar and pollen), and no matter what kinds of plants you like, one of the key ideas to keep in mind is **diversity**:

diversity of plant variety, and diversity of bloom time. The more variety you have, the more insects you can attract. Having plants in your yard that bloom very early in the season, and in late summer and fall, are particularly welcome as those times of year usually have fewer flowers around to provide food for insects. Some [plants recommended by OSU](#) include lavender, Pacific or coast rhododendron, serviceberry, Russian sage, red-flowering currant, salal, catmint, and milkweed.

Hummingbirds can be attracted through sugar-water feeders as well as through numerous flowering plants. While they are particularly fond of red, orange, and pink flowers, they will visit other flowers - especially the tubular ones. Red columbine, honeysuckle, paintbrush, and fireweed are a few of our native plants that are great for these little birds. They like showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*) too.

Additional things you can do to support your pollinating neighbors are avoid using broad-spectrum and systemic insecticides, and provide a shallow water source and habitat for them to raise young in or for hibernation. Habitat can be as simple as leaving a small area of your yard undisturbed, including over the winter. Many insects burrow into dead stems or under layers of fallen leaves to hibernate, as adults or juveniles, during the cold season.