



CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF YOUR BACKYARD POLLINATORS

OVER THE YEARS, we've become more aware of the importance of pollinators in our environment, whether they're bees, flies, wasps, some moths, butterflies or hummingbirds. Pollinators keep plants robust and productive, and are essential parts of a healthy ecosystem. Without pollinators, agricultural food sources are threatened.



You can help keep our pollinators, and the ecosystems that depend on them, healthy by creating welcome spaces for them in your yards, on your decks, or in your community.

1. PLANT DIVERSE FLOWERING PLANTS.

The more diverse the landscaping, the more pollinators you'll have visiting. Having enough variety of plants so that something is in bloom year-round is the easiest way to ensure on-going pollination. Visit your local nursery once a month throughout the year to see what's blooming. Choose a plant you like and find a suitable place for it in your space.



2. PLANT A BEE LAWN.

Instead of a grass lawn, consider a "bee lawn." Convert a traditional grass lawn into a meadow of flowering ground covers like clover or creeping thyme. This cuts down on mowing time and emissions, and provides food for hungry pollinators.



3. OPEN YOUR OWN INSECT HOTEL.

It's easy to become a landlord for a host of bugs and Mason bees. You can purchase a "hotel" at your local garden center, or create your own. Place your hotel facing east for early morning sun. Building and observing an insect hotel is a great activity for kids; what can you learn from a pollinator?

<https://www.hgtv.com/outdoors/flowers-and-plants/how-to-build-a-bug-hotel>



4. ADD A MASON BEE HOUSE.

Mason bees are native, solitary pollinators and rarely sting. You can purchase mason bee houses from your local garden center to get them established in your yard, or build your own.

<http://content.yardmap.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Mason-Bee-Care-1.pdf>



5. PROVIDE WATER FOR POLLINATORS.

All that pollinating can make a bee thirsty. Place a small dish with marbles or rocks and water in your yard or on your patio. This gives bees a safe place to land and drink water without drowning. Bird baths are great for birds, but a little too deep for our bees. Do not add sugar, honey or any other flavoring to the water to avoid growing bacteria and mold. Bees will find your dish and return time and time again if you keep it filled with fresh clean water.

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6. MUD-PUDDLING FOR BUTTERFLIES.

While many butterflies feed on nectar from flowers, they also get essential minerals and salts from mud and manure. When butterflies congregate in mud puddles it's called "mud-puddling". You can create a mud puddle in your garden to help butterflies. Choose a sunny spot in your garden near flowering plants. Place a glazed ceramic saucer in that site, and fill it to within a half inch of the rim with a 1:1 mix of garden soil and composted steer manure (available at nurseries and garden centers). Add water to the mixture to keep it moist all summer – then sit back and watch for butterflies. Come winter, dump the mixture, clean the saucer and store it inside for next year. Refill it again in late spring.

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7. ATTRACTING AND CARING FOR HUMMINGBIRDS.

There are many ways to care for our local hummingbirds. First, fill your yard with native flowering plants, trees and vines. Plants with red and orange tubular flowers are favorites of hummingbirds, so feel free to group them together. Provide sticks and branches as perching places. Avoid pesticides. Hummingbirds love to bathe, and misting devices are particularly attractive to them. Backyard hummingbird feeders are a great way of augmenting food, but you must be mindful of the following to keep your hummingbirds safe:

- Hang feeders far enough apart that hummingbirds don't see each other. This prevents one bird from dominating the rest.
- Fill feeders with sugar water only – made by combining **four (4) parts hot water to one (1) part white sugar**, boiled for one to two minutes. Do not use honey, artificial sweeteners or red dye. They can make hummingbirds sick!
- Hang your feeders in the shade to prevent the sugar solution from fermenting.
- Change the sugar water regularly and before it gets cloudy, or twice a week in warm weather.
- Clean feeders with a **one (1) part white vinegar to four (4) parts water** solution once a week. If the inside of your feeder is dirty, add a few grains of dry rice to the vinegar solution and shake vigorously. Rice acts as a natural abrasive.
- Rinse the feeder well with warm water three times before refilling with sugar water solution.
- Visit eBird (<https://ebird.org/explore>) to find out when the first hummingbird sightings occur each spring in your area, then hang your feeders up a couple weeks before that. In the fall, take your feeders down two weeks after you see the last bird using it.

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