



BUILDING A GARDEN FOR LOCAL POLLINATORS

As part of Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, Inc.'s mission to create vibrant public places that help people and nature thrive, there is added importance in helping our local pollinators. This group includes bees, butterflies, birds, and many other species. It is because of pollinators that plants and crops grow and thrive, and these pollinators are an important asset to any biodiverse system. Helping these pollinators can be as easy as creating a garden space filled with plants and flowers they love!



What You Will Find Here

Within this informational guide, expect to find information relevant to constructing and caring for a garden filled with plants and flowers that are good for local pollinators. The types of plants and relevant information shown here are meant for the Indianapolis area, as it is always best to use native plants to your area when constructing these gardens.

Gardening Safety

There are a few important tips to follow when gardening, including: wearing gloves when working outside, avoiding prolonged repetitive motions by rotating activities every 15 minutes, resting regularly, and using tools and not your hands for digging and removing debris.

Tools & Materials

While there are many tools available to use in gardening, there are a few key essential items that every gardener, from beginners to experts, should have available.

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| 1. Gloves | 6. Spade |
| 2. Pruning Shears | 7. Rake |
| 3. Loppers | 8. Hoe |
| 4. Garden Fork | 9. Garden Hose with Adjustable Nozzle |
| 5. Hand Trowel | 10. Watering Can |

Before You Begin

To ensure the garden you invest in is successful, there are a few things to consider before beginning the process.

1. **Choose Your Location.** Many flowering plants can thrive in both shady and sunny locations, but pollinators like bees and butterflies prefer to bask in the sunshine. Look for plants that prefer full or partial sun. Protection from the wind is also necessary for the happiness of both plant and pollinator.
2. **Identifying Soil Type.** Consider the type of soil you will be working with. Do you find that it is sandy and well-drained or more clay-like and wet? There are test patches or soil maps of your county that you can utilize to determine your soil type. Knowing your soil will help you figure out which plants will thrive best in your garden.
3. **Seeds vs. Plants.** Your timeline and budget, how much you want to invest, and how much time you want to elapse before your plants are flowering will decide whether you buy seeds or nursery-started plants. Seeds are more economical but will need to be planted in the fall or late winter ahead of your summer growing season. Small plants will cost more upfront, but you will have flowering plants within the same season as you plant them.

Planting Your Garden

1. **Choosing Plants with Care.** It's always best to find plants native to your area and that do well in your soil and sunlight conditions. Start by researching varieties of milkweed and wildflowers local to you.
2. **Find Local Nurseries.** Local nurseries to you will have the knowledge and familiarity to help you grow a garden in your county.
3. **Think Multi-Seasonal.** Pollinators will need nectar through Spring, Summer, and even Fall, so plan a garden that will have flowers blooming during each season!
4. **Group Your Plants.** Having clumps of flowering plants will attract more pollinators than plants that are spread out or on their own.
5. **Avoid Insecticides.** Whenever possible, avoid the use of pesticides, insecticides, or neonicotinoids. Similarly, if buying your plants at a nursery, ensure they have not been treated with them either. These have the potential to poison or kill pollinators.

WHY PLANT NATIVE?

Native plants play a vital role in capturing storm water, as well as supporting native bee and pollinator populations. While foreign plants still provide nectar to pollinators, they are not food sources for their young. Additionally, native plants will come back each year, eliminating the need to buy new plants every year!