



THE WISCONSIN POLLINATOR PROTECTION PLAN

Gardens & Lawns

Best Management Practices to Protect Pollinators

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Besides honey bees, Wisconsin has over 400 hundred species of wild bees, including bumble bees, squash bees, and sweat bees that pollinate our crops, gardens, and wildflowers. Flower flies, butterflies, beetles, and hummingbirds also pollinate plants. If you help these pollinators, they'll help you – with bigger yields in your home garden and less work in your yard. Bees are docile and rarely sting unless threatened, and wild bees live alone or in very small groups. You can find more details in the Wisconsin Pollinator Protection Plan, available online.

Plantings

Choose plants that suit your yard's soil type, drainage, slope, and sunlight, and aim to have at least three species blooming from early spring to late fall, selecting a variety of flowers, herbs, fruits, vegetables, trees, and shrubs.

- Plant flowers native to your area. Native plants attract and support pollinators and are usually low maintenance. Wisconsin natives include bee balm, phlox, black-eyed Susan, pale purple coneflowers, asters, goldenrod, and many more. Use native plant lists for Wisconsin, the Great Lakes Region, and the Midwest.
- Let your herb garden flower. Pollinators love flowering herbs, including mint, lavender, basil, oregano, garlic, chives, and parsley.
- Avoid flower varieties that are double-flowered or otherwise highly modified by breeding. These flowers often have little pollen or nectar. Pollinators don't often visit common plants like tulips, daffodils, petunias, and some roses.
- Remove invasive plants and noxious weeds that crowd out desirable plants and restrict the plant diversity that pollinators need.

Nesting

Unlike domesticated honey bee colonies that live in hive boxes, other Wisconsin bees nest in the wild and most are solitary. Smaller bees don't travel far, so they need nesting habitat near flowers.

- Leave some areas of your yard uncultivated so you don't disturb ground nests.
- Plant native bunch grasses like little bluestem. Bumble bees and solitary species will nest at the bases of the grass clumps.
- Leave things a little messy. Wild bees like to nest in old rodent burrows, cavities, abandoned bird nests, hollow plant stems, downed logs, and leaf litter.
- Avoid disturbing existing bee nests. They may look like ant hills, so watch who occupies the nest before you destroy it.
- Use caution with homemade bee nests. They can harbor disease-causing pathogens if not properly maintained and may be colonized by wasps and other insects.
- Let dandelions, clover, and other flowering plants bloom in your lawn. They provide pollen and nectar early in the season when most other plants aren't yet flowering.

Pesticides

If you're using pesticides in your yard or garden, remember that the label is the law.

- Avoid applying insecticides to plants when they're flowering or to areas where pollinators may be nesting.
- Before applying insecticides to your lawn, mow to remove clover or dandelion blooms that might attract pollinators. By the time the flowers regrow, there will be less insecticide in their nectar and pollen.
- Identify pests and assess the damage. The University of Wisconsin Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic has resources to help you identify pests and decide if action is warranted.
- If you must treat because of extensive damage, explore your options to find methods that minimize harm to pollinators and beneficial insects that prey on pests.
- If you treat flowering plants with systemic insecticides, treat them after the plant has finished blooming. Systemic pesticides migrate through the whole plant and may persist in the plant/soil for weeks or months.

Spread the Word

The more neighbors using BMPs to protect pollinators, the bigger the impact.

- **Participate in the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge:** millionpollinatorgardens.org
- **Create a Homegrown National Park; regenerate biodiversity and ecosystem function by planting a network of native plant habitats:** <https://homegrownnationalpark.org>
- **Advertise your pollinator-friendly lawn:** xerces.org/nrcs-pollinator-habitat-sign
- **Join prairie restoration projects:** <https://theprairieenthusiasts.org>
- **Learn to identify honey bees, wild bees, flies, butterflies, and wasps:**
 - ✓ <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/files/2016/08/WI-BEE-IDENTIFICATION-GUIDE.pdf>
 - ✓ **Learn how to identify Wisconsin bees:** <https://pollinators.wisc.edu/bee-identification>
 - ✓ **Learn how to identify bumble bees:** bumblebeewatch.org
 - ✓ **Join the Wisconsin Bumble Bee Brigade:** <https://wiatri.net/inventory/bbb>
 - ✓ **Join The Great Sunflower Project's Safe Gardens Program** greatsunflower.org
 - ✓ **Monarch Watch, plant milkweed, submit monarch data:** monarchwatch.org

Resources

- **Wisconsin Pollinator Protection Plan:** datcp.wi.gov/Documents/PPPComplete.pdf
- **Wisconsin Pollinators: Bees, Butterflies, and Their Conservation:** <https://pollinators.wisc.edu>
- **Xerces Society, Native Plants for Pollinators, Great Lakes Region:** https://xerces.org/sites/default/files/publications/22-021_01_NPPBI%E2%80%9494GreatLakes_web.pdf
- **Pollinator Partnership, Midwest Planting Guide:** https://www.pollinator.org/pollinator.org/assets/generalFiles/pollinator-garden-cards_midwest-region.pdf
- **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Plant Native Plants to Help Nature:** <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/endangeredresources/nativeplants>
- **Plant Native:** <http://plantnative.org>
- **Xerces Society Milkweed Seed Finder:** xerces.org/milkweed-seed-finder
- **DNR invasive species lists:** <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives/RegulatedSpecies>
- **Pesticides toxicity rankings:** <http://www2.ipm.ucanr.edu/bee precaution>