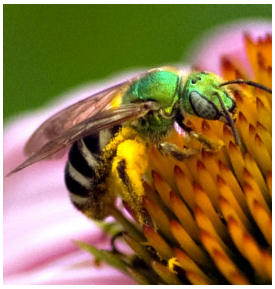
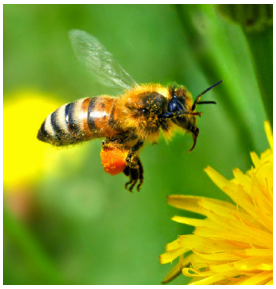
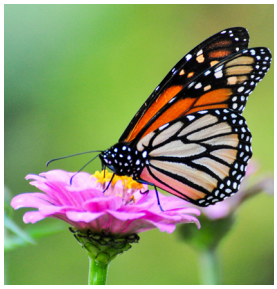
# URBAN POLLINATOR CONSERVATION

## Pollinator Gardening in Louisiana

**Pollinators** are animals that transfer pollen from one plant to another. They are essential for the production of many crops and wildflowers. The honey bee is arguably the most important, but bumblebees, solitary native bees, butterflies, moths, flies and even beetles can also serve as pollinators. Pollinator declines have gained much attention in recent years, and concerned citizens wonder about what they can do to help. Fortunately, establishing pollinator gardens in your community will go a long way towards sustaining these important and beneficial insects!

**Common garden visitors.** North America alone is home to over 4,000 species of native bees that vary in size from tiny Perdita to the easily recognizable carpenter and bumblebees. Louisiana has over 200 bee species! While some are distinguished by yellow, orange or red stripes, others range in color from all black to metallic blues and greens.

Providing habitat around your home to support our six-legged friends will benefit more than just pollinators—healthy gardens support many other insects too. Natural enemies (predators and parasitoids) like green lacewings, ladybugs, spiders and solitary wasps are attracted to flowering plants and are great at controlling common garden pests without the need for insecticides. Hover flies, often mistaken for sweat bees, even have a predaceous larval stage. You might spot cuckoo bees that parasitize the nests of other bees. This may seem like a bad thing, but diverse insect communities are a sign of a healthy ecosystem and a healthy garden!

**Considerations when choosing plants.** Bees provision their nests with pollen to feed to their young in the spring, while butterflies sip nectar as they search for host plants to lay their eggs. Not all plants are equally good at producing pollen and nectar, so planning your garden to have good sources of both throughout the year is important. Many common ornamental plants are selected for showy flowers at the expense of nectar and pollen production. Choosing native



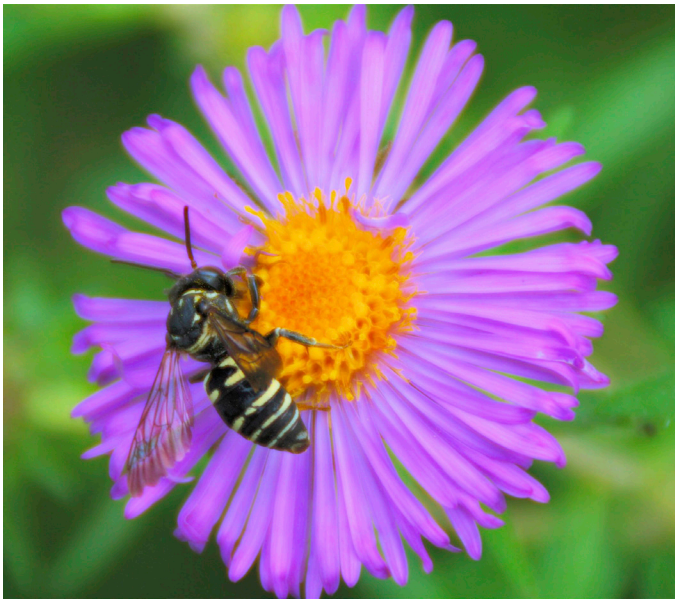
and heirloom varieties will ensure that pollinators benefit from your garden.

Some species of bees specialize on one type of flower, like the Southeastern blueberry bee, while others are generalists and can feed on many types of flowers. Provide a variety of floral shapes, sizes, and colors to attract the greatest diversity to your garden. Group plantings of a species together to create bold color statement, which will also help pollinators locate your garden. Seeds of zinnia, cosmos and Shasta daisy are an inexpensive way to cover a large area in blooms throughout the summer. Be sure to check with experts at your local nursery to identify plants that will work best in your garden.

**Edible landscaping.** Not all pollinator habitats need to be ornamental. Consider this: one in every three bites of food we eat relies on pollination. But we aren't the only ones to benefit from this interaction—plants produce nectar and pollen specifically to attract pollinators. A 100 sq. ft. vegetable garden can produce hundreds of pounds of produce in a summer! If this seems daunting, consider an herb garden—flowering borage, lavender, rosemary and basil also benefits pollinators. Citrus or pecan trees in southern Louisiana can double as shade trees, and blueberries, which are native to the region, can be trained as hedges.

**Nesting habitat.** Honey bees travel many miles from their hives in search of food, but the majority of native bees only travel a few hundred feet from their nests. Providing habitat for nesting is therefore essential to ensuring native bees come back to your garden year after year. "Bee hotels" (or bed-and-breakfasts when combined with a garden!) can serve as a focal point and give children a safe and up-close look at nesting behaviors of our native stingless bees. These can be easily constructed using recycled garden materials. Be sure also to leave patches of soil free from mulch or pine straw, since 70% of native bees nest in the ground.

**Additional information** may be found at the Xerces Society (www.xerces.org/pollinator-conservation), the Pollinator Partnership (pollinator.org/guides) and the LSU AgCenter (www.LSUAgCenter.com).





| Examples of plant species to use for Louisiana pollinator gardens and general landscaping and when they bloom. | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Common name** | **Scientific name** | **Type[1]** | **Notes[2]** | **Jan[3] Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec** |
| Lemons/limes | Citrus sp. | T | P, I | |
| Hairy vetch | Vicia villosa | W | P, I | |
| Butterweed | Packera glabella | W | A, N | |
| Buckwheat tree | Cliftonia monophylla | T | P, N | |
| Rabbiteye blueberry | Vaccinium ashei | Sh | P, N | |
| Verbena | Verbena canadensis | W | P, N | |
| Blue vervain | Verbena bonariensis | W | P, I | |
| Yaupon holly | Ilex vomitoria | T | P, N | |
| Coreopsis | Coreopsis lanceolata | W | A, N | |
| Spiderwort | Tradescantia | W | P, N | |
| Buttonbush | Cephalanthus occidentalis | Sh | P, N | |
| Wisteria | Wisteria frutescens | V | P, N | |
| Butterflyweed | Asclepias sp. | W | P, N | |
| Prairie rose | Rosa carolina | Sh | P, N | |
| Purple coneflower | Echinacea purpurea | W | P, N | |
| Black-eyed Susan | Rudbeckia hirta | W | P, N | |
| Beautyberry | Callicarpa americana | Sh | P, N | |
| Crepe myrtle | Lagerstroemia | T | P, I | |
| Maypop/ Passionflower | Passiflora incarnata | V | P, N | |
| Blazing star | Liatris spicata | W | P, N | |
| Sunflower | Helianthus | W | A, N | |
| Blanketflower | Gaillardia pulchella | W | P, N | |
| Ironweed | Vernonia altissima | W | P, N | |
| Goldenrod | Solidago altissima | W | P, N | |

[1]Type: Sh=shrub, T=tree, V=vine, W=wildflower; [2]Notes: P=perennial, A=annual, N=native to Louisiana, I=introduced or ornamental/non-weedy in Louisiana; [3]Line color refers to flower color. Gray/white=white flowers, blue dots=multiple colors available.

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