

Gardening for Wildlife

What Should You Plant?

Native plants!

Planting natives provides the highest quality resources for native wildlife. Native plants to your region will include perennials that will not only come back every year, but are more drought tolerant so they require less watering, and will spread naturally if taken care of.

Host plants:

Host plants are those that a particular species lives on and feeds on! Butterflies will lay their eggs on plants that provide food for the caterpillars. Most caterpillars have specific food requirements and may only eat limited plant species. Determine which wildlife species you'd like to attract.

Remontants:

Flowering plants that will bloom multiple times a year. These plants include natives such as coneflowers, purpletop vervain, butterflyweed, Hilianthus sunflowers, and many more. It is important to have different kinds of native that will bloom at different times of the year. However, it's also nice and important to have some natives that will keep blooming in between your seasonal bloomers to have maximum productivity in your garden for visiting and residential wildlife.

Fall blooming flowers:

Many of our insect pollinators and songbirds that rely on flowers for food, also migrate! Migrants such as the Monarch butterfly need fall blooming plants that will provide the nectar they need to store fat for their journey. Fall blooming perennials such as goldenrods, asters, thoroughworts, blazing-stars, and more are perfect resources for migrating wildlife.

Tips and Tricks

Leave the leaves!

In autumn, the fallen leaves and plant stems act as an essential habitat for many insect species and some species lay their eggs within the leaf litter. Consider leaving the leaves to provide that natural habitat. Additionally, decomposing leaf litter will return nutrients to the soil!

What's a weed anyway?

There is no such thing as a weed! Research plants before you pull them and find out which ones may be a problem for your garden. Many species are labeled weeds but may actually benefit your garden. Grasses and invasive, introduced plants are usually the culprits that overtake gardens.

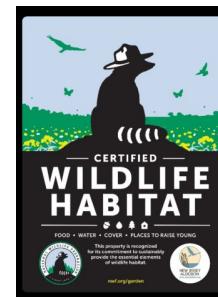
Spread your plants out!

Lots of people like to plant all of one plant in a single area, with patches of plants separated from each other. By intermixing wildflowers and natives when planting, your garden will start to replicate habitats in nature and turn into a thriving ecosystem.



Certify your Garden!

Consider transforming any of your outdoor spaces into a Certified Wildlife Habitat. Provide the resources for wildlife, such as pollinators and songbirds, need to survive, thrive, and reproduce.



Your guide to starting your own wildlife friendly garden



Cape May Bird Observatory
New Jersey Audubon

Pamphlet sponsored by the Diane Cornell Wildlife Garden Project

Why a Wildlife Garden?

One of the most severe threats to biodiversity is habitat loss. Commercial development, agriculture, livestock pastures, and various other anthropogenic activities have led to the destruction and fragmentation of our natural landscapes. Although not everything that has been vitiated can be reversed, by adding habitat back on our own properties, it creates invaluable ecological stepping stones between larger ecosystems for wildlife. This not only increases biodiversity, but aids in combatting climate change. Over 70% of US land is privately owned, either by housing or by business. So transforming even a small section of your property into a wildlife friendly garden can make a tremendous difference.

Supporting Pollinators

Pollinators play a critical role in our ecosystems. Native pollinators are affected by many challenges including habitat loss, increased herbicide and pesticide use, expanding populations of invasive species, increased droughts, and other major effects of climate change. Make your garden a haven for pollinators by avoiding chemical pesticides, planting flowering native plants, providing shade, and clean water!



Selecting Your Location

You don't have to rework your entire property to start a wildlife garden! Assess what space is available and how it can be used. Your garden can be in your front yard, backyard or even a simple flower bed wherever space is available. Start with a small manageable area and work your way up. Select an area that receives lots of sun to attract butterflies and other pollinating insects, which require warmth.

Where to Get Plants

Always look for native plant nurseries in your area. These could be private businesses, nature centers, or other environmental organizations selling plants. Making sure that your plants are grown organically without neonicotinoid seed coatings is essential to making sure the wildlife you attract stays healthy.



Find native plants in your area!

NJ Audubon Native Plant Sales



Native plant, seed, and services directory

Find safe, organic solutions to fighting invasives



Homegrown National Park



Creating Monarch Waystations



Things to Avoid

Herbicides and Pesticides:

Chemical pesticides can act as a major threat to wildlife in several different ways. Insecticides may directly harm caterpillars and butterflies that you are trying to attract to your garden. Herbicides may reduce available nectar producing plants that will provide food for wildlife.

Fertilizers:

Chemical fertilizers can also have adverse effects on ecosystems. Too much fertilizer may 'run off' the plot and disrupt surrounding waterways and habitats. Instead search for wildlife friendly alternatives. For example, adding mulch to your garden can help inhibit weeds, and when it begins to decompose, it will act as a natural fertilizer by adding extra nutrients to your soil.

