

Pollinator Garden Planning Guide



Plants are critical to the stability of Earth's ecosystems, and over 70% of them rely on pollinators. When a pollinator – such as a bee, butterfly or hummingbird – encounters pollen, these dust-like grains cover the animal and is then deposited onto other plants as they travel. An estimated 30% of the food we eat is the result of pollination. Therefore, plants and their pollinators are essential to our survival.

To support the pollinators that help provide for our basic needs, we should do our part to stabilize and maintain healthy ecosystems. One way we can help is to grow and cultivate gardens with native plants. A garden of any size can attract local pollinators and provide them with food and shelter.

So, plant a garden at your Club! Encourage youth to explore wildlife, cultivate empathy for the natural world, and advocate for healthy ecosystems. At the same time, youth will support their emotional wellness when they engage with wildlife and spend time in nature reflecting, working and playing.

This guide is designed to help you start a pollinator garden. All you need is some commitment and a little planning. As a result, youth will gain knowledge and appreciation for the world around them. Help youth discover how we are all connected in the environmental chain of life. Happy gardening!

Plan a Pollinator Garden

Consider your outdoor space and garden volunteers.

Plan a garden that works with your space. Spend some time outside your Club to determine the best location. While wildflowers can grow in a variety of places, pollinators like bees and butterflies prefer warm and sunny places.

Here are a few more things consider.

- Generate a list of volunteers who are committed to supporting your Club's garden.
- Assign willing staff and youth roles in planning for, creating and maintaining the garden.
- Create an annual gardening budget, rather than only focusing on garden costs for the first growing season.
- Start small when designing your garden so staff and youth do not become overwhelmed.



Choose your garden type.

There are many garden options to choose from. Your best options will depend on your location and available space. If you live in a region with fertile soil and you have sufficient outdoor space, you can plant directly in the ground.

If your space is limited and/or you lack quality soil, don't be discouraged. You have options!

- Make or purchase raised garden beds.
- Collect and repurpose old shoes into pots for your plants!
- Ensure your pots or containers have holes for water drainage.
- Let youth get crafty and decorate pots or planters.



Select your plants.

There are so many plants to choose from. Native plants are best for pollinator gardens since they are adapted to the local weather and climate. Therefore, native plants require less maintenance and are better for your regional environment.



Determine whether you would like to purchase seeds or starter plants.

- Seeds are more cost efficient, but they take more time to grow.
- Small plants are more expensive, but you will see them bloom and attract pollinators quickly.

Next, determine if you will plant perennials or annuals. While perennials may be more expensive to purchase initially, they are a worthy investment. Perennials:

- Bloom each year
- Provide a consistent blooming season
- Cut down on the plants you need to purchase and plant each season
- Are typically hardier and require less maintenance

Finally, if you are planning a raised garden or to plant in pots, choose plants that are compact or well-suited to container planting.

**Purchase Your Supplies**

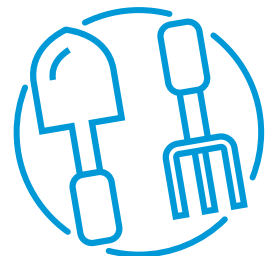
Once you have chosen the type of plants you would like in your garden, contact your local nursery. Nurseries are typically staffed with people who love plants and know a lot about what thrives in your region. They will be happy to help you select the perfect plants for your garden.

To learn more about which species of plants are native to your region, visit pollinator.org/guides. Then enter your ZIP code to access a planting guide specific to your location. You can also contact your local native plants society or the **USDA Extension Office** directory for such resources as:

- Planting guides for your region
- Soil tests
- Lesson plans and curricula

The overall price of your garden will depend on your available space and garden size. Plan to purchase the following items.

- **Soil:** Nutrient-rich soil is critical for growing healthy plants in any garden. Depending if you are planting in the ground, in a raised bed or in pots, there are many varieties available. Check with your local nursery for the best soil for your garden.
- **Tools:** You will need supplies like shovels, rakes and gardening gloves. Consider investing in quality tools so that they will last for many seasons to come.
- **Plants:** Once you determine the type of flowers to purchase, and whether you prefer seeds or small plants, contact your local nursery for assistance.
- **Optional:** Purchase art supplies for youth to decorate garden beds, pots and any signage to personalize your garden.



Plant and Maintain Your Garden

Tell youth about your plans to create a pollinator garden at your Club. Ask for volunteers to help you plant and maintain the garden.

- Choose a date and time for your garden planting event.
- Assign youth gardening roles.
- Gather your materials.
- Start planting!



Because you are creating a native plant garden, there is minimal maintenance required. Even so, schedule time to weed and water your garden when necessary. If you need help planting and/or maintaining your garden, reach out to your local [Master Gardeners](#) program. This organization includes volunteer gardeners all over North America who may be able to support you.



Youth Engagement

Spending time outdoors is therapeutic for everyone, including young people. Guided outdoor programs like gardening can help youth strengthen their social-emotional and communication skills, especially when working within a group. At the same time, youth will build empathy and appreciation for the natural world around them. Gardening is a vehicle for discovering the relationship between us humans and wildlife. It encourages youth to think of themselves as part of an ecological community. Caring for a garden challenges young people to maintain an environmental space that positively impacts their backyard ecosystem.

Here are some tips for engaging young people to create and care for your Club's pollinator garden. These methods will increase youths' connection and commitment to maintaining their outdoor space.

- Allow your youth to participate in as much of the gardening process as possible.
- Ensure each young person has a defined role to play in the gardening process.
- Encourage youth to create garden art in the form of murals or signage.
- Help youth keep garden journals, logging plant growth and health as well as pollinators that visit your garden.
- If possible, make all or some of your garden space ADA accessible.
- Build community connections and invite volunteers, such as family members, to help with your garden.
- Celebrate planting and blooming seasons by sharing videos and hosting a garden party for youth's families and community volunteers.

Links to Resources

For more information on gardening, or to connect with gardening professionals, please visit:

Kids Gardening (kidsgardening.org)

Ecoregional Planting Guides (pollinator.org/guides)

Extension Offices (NIFA.USDA.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory?state=533)

Master Gardeners – American Horticultural Society (ahsgardening.org/gardening-resources/master-gardeners/?state=la)

Video: “Why You Should Start a Pollinator Garden – Cincinnati Zoo” (video on Bing.com)

For information on how to plant and maintain your garden, please visit these videos on Bing.com:

Video: “How to Maintain Pollinator Garden – Cincinnati Zoo” (youtu.be/ALYpvCrwVFg)

Video: “How to Plant Flowers | Lawn & Garden Care” (youtu.be/ARwB7xb--sQ)

Video: “How to Plant a Container Garden” (youtu.be/Lrr40VJ1uq4)

Video: “Gardening From Seeds: How to Plant Seeds in a Container” (youtu.be/NUHSpeUj-NQ)

For more information on pollinators, please visit:

Pollinator Conservation Resource Center – Xerces Society (xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center)

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS.gov/initiative/pollinators)

Pollinator.org

USDA (USDA.gov/pollinators)

U.S. National Park Service (nps.gov/sacn/learn/nature/pollinators.htm)vv

Pollinator Garden Checklist

Instructions: Use this checklist to note your selections on the provided lines, and check off each item as you complete it.

1. Plan

- ☐ Choose your garden location:
- ☐ Inform staff and youth of your plan to start a garden:
- ☐ Recruit gardening volunteers and determine their roles:
- ☐ Create an annual budget:
- ☐ Choose your garden type (in-ground, raised bed or containers):
- ☐ Select your plants (seeds or small plants, perennials or annuals, etc.):

2. Purchase

- ☐ Contact your local nursery and/or online resources for information:
- ☐ Purchase soil according to your garden type:
- ☐ Purchase tools (rakes, shovels, gloves, etc.):
- ☐ Purchase your selected plants:
- ☐ Purchase art supplies for youth's garden art:

3. Plant and Maintain

- ☐ Determine a date and time to plant your garden:
- ☐ Assign youth and volunteer gardening roles:
- ☐ Gather materials:
- ☐ Plant your garden:
- ☐ Determine a schedule to weed and water your garden (if necessary):
- ☐ Determine ways to showcase the new garden: