

Full Sun Pollinator Garden Native Plant Selections & Design

What is a pollinator garden?

A pollinator garden is a cultivated landscape with plants that attract and provide food for pollinators such as butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. University of Illinois Extension estimates that one of every four mouthfuls of food and drink are due to pollinators, so it is in our best interest to support them. This guide features a planting plan that creates year-round interest for people and extends the foraging season for pollinators. Another benefit is that the native plant's long root system improves the soil's ability to absorb water. Please note that while only native plants are used in this example, non-natives can also benefit pollinators. For more information, visit the University of Illinois Extension Horticulture website: extension.illinois.edu/global/horticulture.

Pollinator Garden Plants

This example Pollinator Garden design utilizes plants that grow in full sun conditions with medium soil moisture levels.

Wildflowers – To extend pollinator foraging seasons, this selection of wildflowers includes species that bloom from April to October.

- **Foxglove Beardtongue** (Latin name *Penstemon digitalis*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Medium soil moisture.
 - White flowers in spring.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 2 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Purple Prairie Clover** (Latin name *Dalea purpurea*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Medium to dry soil.
 - Purple flowers spring through summer.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Pale Purple Coneflower** (Latin name *Echinacea pallida*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Medium to dry soil.
 - Pink flowers late spring through summer.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Gray-Headed Coneflower** (Latin name *Ratibida pinnata*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Medium soil moisture.
 - Yellow flowers summer into early fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 2 to 4 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Drought tolerant.

- **Orange Butterflyweed** (Latin name *Asclepias tuberosa*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Medium to dry soil.
 - Orange flowers in summer.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies, and is a Monarch butterfly host plant.
 - Grows 1 to 2 feet tall and 1 to 3 feet wide.
 - Drought tolerant.
- **Wild Bergamot** (Latin name *Monarda fistulosa*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Medium to moist soil.
 - Pinkish-purple flowers in summer.
 - Attracts bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.
 - Grows 2 to 4 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Common Mountain Mint** (Latin name *Pycnanthemum virginianum*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Medium to moist soil.
 - White flower in mid- to late summer.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Rough Blazing Star** (Latin name *Liatris aspera*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Medium to dry soil.
 - Pinkish-purple flowers mid-summer into fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 2 to 5 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Smooth Blue Aster** (Latin name *Symphyotrichum laeve*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Medium to moist soil.
 - Pinkish-purple flowers mid-summer to late fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 2 to 4 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.

Grasses – Grasses add texture and seasonal interest to the garden. Some also act as groundcovers, which help to maintain moisture levels and suppress weed growth.

- **Prairie Dropseed** (Latin name *Sporobolus heterolepis*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Medium to dry soil.
 - Green grassy foliage throughout the growing season that turns golden brown in fall.
 - Seeds are attractive to various birds.
 - Grows 1 to 2 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
 - Good groundcover.

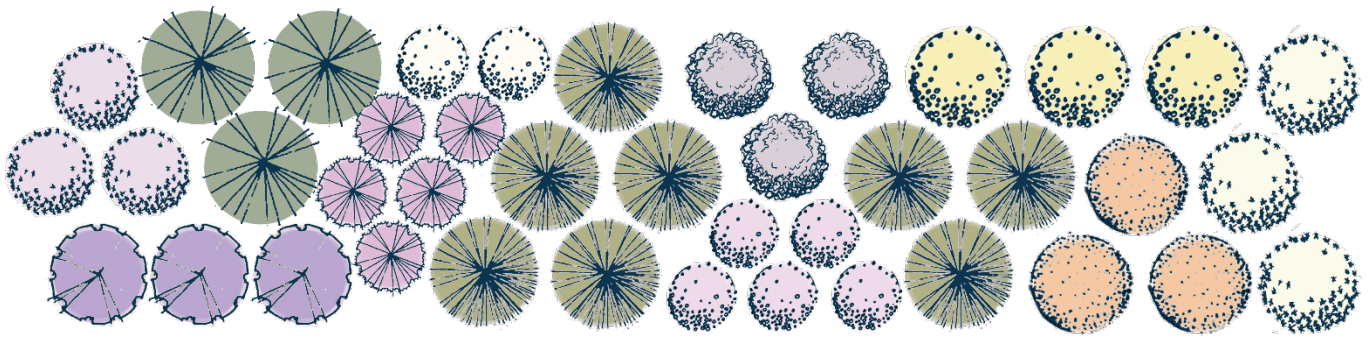
- Little Bluestem (Latin name *Schizachyrium scoparium*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Medium to dry soil.
 - Green grassy foliage throughout the growing season that turns to shades of red in fall.
 - Seeds are attractive to various birds.
 - Grows 2 to 3 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.

PLANTING DESIGN

Example Design

In this example design for planting a rectangular 6 foot wide by 25 foot long pollinator garden, you will need:

- **3 Smooth Blue Aster** spaced 1½ feet apart. Plant three in a triangle pattern on the left edge of the garden.
- **3 Purple Prairie Clover** spaced 1½ feet apart. Plant three in a row at the front of the left side with Smooth Blue Aster Little Bluestem behind.
- **3 Little Bluestem** spaced 2 feet apart. Plant three in a triangle pattern behind the Purple Prairie Clover and to the right of the Smooth Blue Aster.
- **2 Foxglove Beardtongue** spaced 1 foot apart. Plant two in a row at the back edge of the garden to the right of the Little Bluestem.
- **5 Rough Blazing Star** spaced 1 foot apart. Plant five in a group in front of the Foxglove Beardtongue and to the right of the Little Bluestem and Purple Prairie Clover.
- **8 Prairie Dropseed** spaced 2 feet apart. Plant five in a group to the right of the Foxglove Beardtongue and Rough Blazing Star. This group will span from the front of the garden to the back. Plant 3 in a triangle pattern 4 feet to the right of the larger group, at the front of the garden.
- **3 Wild Bergamot** spaced 2 feet apart. Plant three in a triangle pattern to the right of the large group of Prairie Dropseed.
- **5 Pale Purple Coneflower** spaced 1 foot apart. Plant five in a group in front of the Wild Bergamot and between the two groups of Prairie Dropseed.
- **3 Gray-Headed Coneflower** spaced 2 feet apart. Plant three in a row at the back of the garden to the right of the Wild Bergamot and behind the smaller group of Prairie Dropseed.
- **3 Orange Butterflyweed** spaced 2 feet apart. Plant three in a triangle pattern to the right of the smaller group of Prairie Dropseed at the front of the garden.
- **3 Common Mountain Mint** spaced 2 feet apart along the entire right side of the garden.



Additional Options

If you need a smaller pollinator garden or are new to native plants, one strategy is to start out with a limited number of species. More species can always be added later as you learn more about what works best in your space. While suggested plant lists and design templates can help, you can personalize your garden however you like, but be sure to check local municipal or HOA ordinances.

Two options for pollinator garden native plant combinations that feature only three species are:

Option One:

- Purple Prairie Clover
- Pale Purple Coneflower
- Prairie Dropseed

Option Two:

- Butterflyweed
- Rough Blazing Star
- Little Bluestem

Rain Garden Options:

While the plants in this brochure are all sun-loving species, they prefer a variety of moisture levels. For placement in a rain garden, they are best suited for slopes and higher banks.

WHERE TO FIND PLANTS AND MORE INFORMATION

The plant palette is inspired by the Red Oak Rain Garden: <https://redoakraingarden.org/>. The Illinois Native Plant Society webpage lists sources of native plants: illinoisplants.org. For more information about plants, go to the University of Illinois Extension Horticulture website: extension.illinois.edu/global/horticulture.

PUT YOUR NATIVE PLANT GARDEN ON THE MAP

You can be part of a network of native plantings by registering your Illinois native plant garden or rain garden. This helps build community and encourage native plant use. Add your native plant garden to the map: go.illinois.edu/GardenMap.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Funding provided by Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant.

Produced by C. Eliana Brown, University of Illinois Extension.

Researched and designed by Layne Knoche with contributions from Kate Gardiner, University of Illinois Extension.

Edited and reviewed by Chris Enroth and Travis Cleveland, University of Illinois Extension, Kara Salazar, Purdue University, Irene Miles and Joel Davenport, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant.