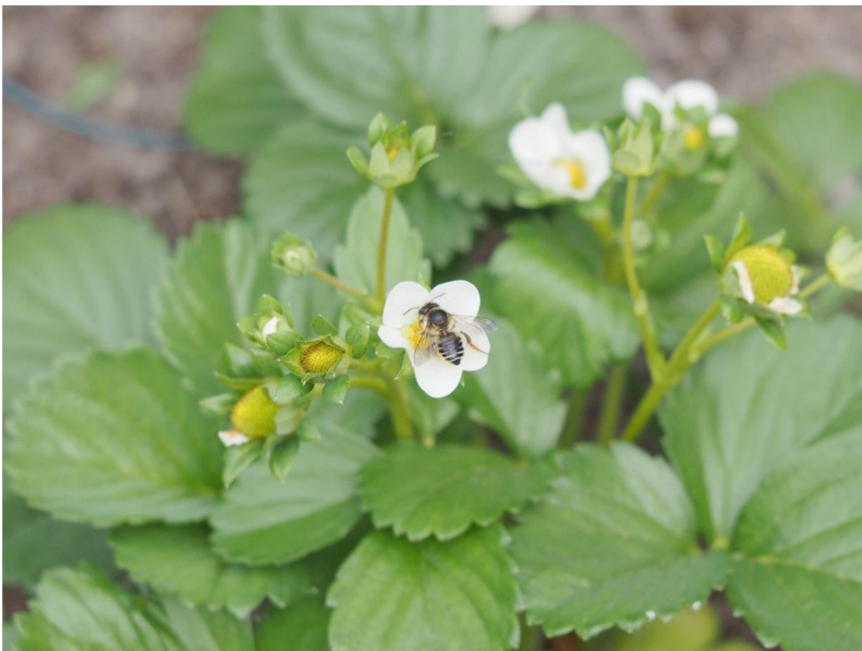


Supporting wild pollinators in your community garden

Wild pollinators – native bees, flies, moths, butterflies, beetles, and more – are a very effective, often overlooked workforce. Their services support the natural world and enhance the productivity and quality of food plants.

If the plants in your community garden are flowering and productive, you are already receiving the free services of wild pollinators. You can show your appreciation, attract even more pollinators, and support all beneficial insects by taking some — or all! — of the following measures.



More pollinators = better food

Research shows that the size and quality of fruits and vegetables increase when diverse wild pollinators are involved. Recent studies reveal, for example, that [strawberries](#) and [apples](#) grown near forests, hedgerows and other natural habitats are bigger and better because those areas support a diversity of wild pollinators.

Show your support for wild pollinators

Put up a sign that expresses how much you value the important work wild pollinators do in your community garden. Choose the message that best reflects your space and your appreciation. See [WPP garden signs](#).

1. Identify and protect existing areas that support pollinators

If you have the following sorts of areas in your community garden, leave them as they are and, if possible, enhance them by adding more plants that are native to our region:

- **patches of wildflowers** and some plants we consider to be “weeds” offer food and shelter to pollinators
- **long grass** provides shelter, nesting areas, and food for the larvae of beneficial insects
- **bare soil** on flat or sloped ground is a welcome nesting site for solitary bees
- **hedges** supply food, shelter, and nesting sites
- **stone walls or brush piles** offer shelter and overwintering sites

No sting, no worries

Wild bees are not aggressive, so it is safe to have them working and nesting in your community garden. In fact, males of all bee species are incapable of stinging.



Assess the pollinator habitat potential of your community garden

How well does your community garden currently support pollinators? Where can you make improvements? To help you figure it out, we have developed a [pollinator habitat assessment tool](#)

2. Plant the edges

Does your community garden have a partial or complete fence? Does it have boundaries that you would like to enhance or define more clearly? If you answer “yes” to either of these questions, consider adding a pollinator strip or hedge to your fence or perimeter.

A pollinator strip or hedge will provide food, shelter, and nesting and overwintering sites for pollinators in a continuous flow all around the community garden. It will enable insects to thrive, to live and travel safely, and to play their roles in enhancing both the productivity of your plants and the quality of your vegetables and fruit. Everyone will benefit.

Pollinator strip – A low-profile, pollinator-friendly planting that adds colour and beauty to the perimeter or fence of the community garden. Ideally, it would include

- perennials – species native to the region and/or older varieties of cultivated plants and herbs that produce plenty of pollen and nectar
- a variety of green vegetation for use as bee nesting material and food for larvae of other pollinating insects

Make sure to

- combine plants that flower at different times (see Ontario Wildflowers' [Flowering seasons](#))
- select plants with a variety of flower shapes, sizes, and colours to meet the needs of diverse pollinators
- plant in clusters or drifts to make the flowers easily visible and to make foraging easy for pollinators
- avoid showy “double blooms” that make it difficult for insects to access the flower and that may not provide pollen

Wild is better

Wild native bees are highly effective pollinators and a viable alternative to non-native, managed honeybees. They are, in fact, better pollinators for many plants than honeybees. See [Wild pollinator habitat benefits agriculture](#).



Pollinator hedge – A more substantial border, preferably with a diversity of native perennial trees, shrubs, canes, and vines that produce fruit, nuts, and seeds. The result will be a flowering, attractive edge that offers

- food, shelter, nesting and overwintering sites for pollinators
- a feature that attracts, shelters, and feeds birds that eat garden pests
- privacy and shelter from the wind for gardeners, plants, and insects
- roots that retain soil moisture and store carbon
- additional food harvest potential for community garden members

Make sure to

- plant species that bloom at different times (see [Flowering seasons](#))
- integrate diverse native ground covers, perennials, and grasses for additional layers of pollinator habitat

- avoid over-managing the hedge — leave it relatively natural by pruning different sections on a 3-year rotational cycle; this approach will disturb fewer nesting pollinators and birds and will ensure flowers every season



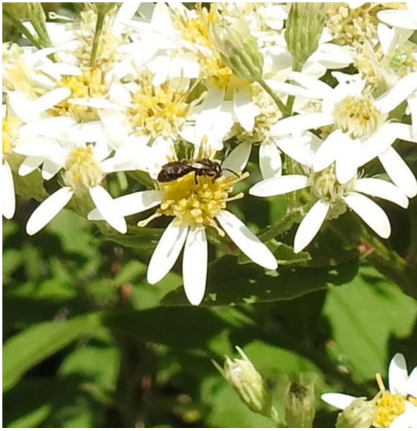
Go natural

Your community garden may already be chemical-free. If it isn't, strive to avoid using chemicals – they can harm pollinators, other beneficial insects, soil organisms and desirable wildlife. Whenever possible, find alternative ways to solve garden issues and avoid damaging the natural systems at work in your community garden. See [Grow a chemical-free garden](#) and [The secret to a pest- and chemical-free garden](#)

3. Cultivate the shadows and other marginal spaces

Does your community garden have places where it is difficult to incorporate a planting bed – spaces like shady corners, dry spots, moist areas, or oddly shaped nooks? If so, consider filling those spaces with native plant species.

- **shady corners** are great places to grow woodland wildflowers, shrubs, and small trees – some of which bloom early in the season, offering critical nourishment when pollinators start to emerge from hibernation
- **dry spots** are not a problem for many hardy native perennials and flowering herbs that support wild pollinators
- **heavy clay soils** offer conditions where many adaptable and attractive native plants can thrive
- **moist areas** are welcome environments for numerous resilient and appealing native perennials that attract wild pollinators
- **oddly-shaped nooks** can accommodate a diversity of plants, including flowering ground covers, perennials and shrubs for layers of pollinator habitat, or brush and rock piles for potential nesting and overwintering sites



Plants for particular conditions and habitats

[Drought tolerant plants for sun and shade](#)

[Native plants for clay soils](#)

[Wildflowers by habitat](#)

4. Plant for season-long flowering

If you grow mainly food plants in your community garden, there will be abundant flowers during the summer. But pollinators need food throughout the season, including early spring when they emerge from hibernation, and fall when they are migrating or preparing to overwinter. No matter what you grow in your community garden, you can help pollinators by deliberately planting to provide a continuous succession of blooms.

For best results, plant a diversity of mostly native species, which co-evolved with native insects. Select a wide variety of colours, sizes, and flower shapes, and group them in clusters to make foraging easy for pollinators.

Flowering periods of native species

See Ontario Wildflowers' [Flowering seasons](#)

Finding native plants

For information about obtaining native plants in the Ontario East – Outaouais region, visit the [Resources](#) page on our website.

WILD POLLINATOR PARTNERS

Ontario east — Outaouais

*Supporting wild pollinators,
empowering people who care*

Web site: wildpollinators-pollinisateurssauvages.ca

Facebook: www.facebook.com/WildPollinators

Twitter: @WildPollinators

Email: info@wildpollinators-pollinisateurssauvages.ca