Why are natives so important?

Butterflies, bees, hummingbirds and moths depend on native plants for their rich nectar and pollen. While going about their daily business, pollinators transfer pollen between flowers of the same species. These pollinated plants will then produce fertile seed. Unfortunately, native plants are becoming displaced by non-native species.

Pollinators are critical to our food supply and are responsible for the pollination of the vast majority of all flowering plants. Foods and beverages produced with the help of pollinators include: apples, blueberries, chocolate, coffee, melons, peaches, potatoes, pumpkins, vanilla, almonds and tequila. Over 150 food crops in the US depend on pollinators!

Native plants also are beneficial to songbirds. These plants support native insects, most of which are specialists rather than generalists and will not feed on non-natives. Insects are a critical food source for a variety of birds and other animals, particularly those raising young. Baby birds depend on berries and seeds from native species. Leaves spent their winter months hibernating as pupae in leaf litter, which is also a habitat for chipmunks, shrews, box turtles, and other wildlife.

In addition, birds depend on berries and seeds of shrubs, grasses, and flowers in the fall and winter.

Native plants work well for landscaping, and once established they rarely need watering or maintenance. They are adapted to the local climate and soil conditions. Native plants are becoming displaced by non-native species.

Native require less care! They are adapted to the local climate and soil conditions. Native plants work well for landscaping, and once established they rarely need watering or mowing. Less time working on the garden means more time relaxing and enjoying it!

Gardening for wildlife tips

Choose plants that bloom from early spring to late fall, with at least three species that bloom each season. This provides food throughout the growing season.

Provide both “host” and “nectar” plants. Monarch butterflies are especially vulnerable due to problems in their wintering grounds as well as a decrease in milkweed and other host plants. Help monarchs by planting milkweed in your garden and fields.

Plant variety. Different flower shapes, colors, sizes and heights. Plant species in bunches, rather than singly, which makes it easier for pollinators to locate them.

Plant layers. Think from the tree canopies down to the ground. Map out your yard to make sure that what you have in mind will work.

Before choosing your plants, make sure they are suitable for the sun, shade and water availability for your garden, as well as the soil type.

Make sure the plants you are purchasing will fit in your garden when mature. Check online for their “spread”.

Because even ‘organic’ pesticides can harm wildlife, please don’t use pesticides!

Some insect damage on your plants is a good thing; it means the plant is being utilized by wildlife as it should be.

Provide water sources for wildlife. This includes bird baths, ponds, water features and puddling areas for butterflies.

Leave snags if they don’t pose a hazard. Over 85 bird species rely on dead tree snags to nest, feed or seek cover.

Don’t remove that brush pile or rake up leaf litter. Many animals need dense cover to nest, shelter, sleep and hide from predators. Place brush piles in an area of the property that will not create complaints from your neighbors, or better yet, explain to them how they too can help wildlife. Leave a layer of leaves: many moths and butterflies spend their winter months hibernating as pupae in leaf litter, which is also a habitat for chipmunks, shrews, box turtles, and other wildlife.

For more information:

Long Island Natives: http://longislandnatives.com/
Long Island Native Plant Initiative: http://www.lnpi.org/
Glover’s Perennials: http://gloversperennials.com/
Native Plant List for LI: http://www.plantnative.org/pl-denjny.htm

Other Beneficial Plants

Trees and shrubs
Native oaks, birches, cherries and maples
Sassafras
Flowering dogwood
Redbud
Eastern red cedar
American holly
Buttonbush
American witch hazel
Serviceberry
Inkberry
Bearberry

Vines
Trumpet honeysuckle
Virginia creeper
Wild grape

Grasses
Switchgrass, Blue oat grass, Pennsylvania sedge

Check our resources above for more natives!

Landscaping with Native Plants
Creating backyard habitats for wildlife

Whether you have a container garden, a small yard, or a property with many acres, you can help protect wildlife. Conservation isn’t just about protecting wildlife habitat in parks, preserves and wilderness areas. It’s also about creating a network of pocket habitats and refuges for wildlife that provide food, water, shelter and a place to rear young, right in our own backyards!

Inside you’ll find some beautiful native plants to add to your landscaping as well as tips that will help you protect wildlife.

Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon


tips that will help you protect wildlife
**Swamp Milkweed**
_Asclepias incarnata_
Height: 4-6’
Blooms May-June
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Medium to wet but can tolerate drought
Important nectar and host plant for Monarch butterflies
Hummingbirds have been known to feast on milkweed!

**Purple coneflower**
_Echinacea purpurea_
Height: 2-3’
Blooms July-August
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Dry to medium
Attracts both birds and butterflies. Goldfinches love its seeds!

**Wild Geranium**
_Geranium maculatum_
Height: 1.5-2’
Blooms April-May
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Medium
Nectar for early pollinators
Best in shady areas but will tolerate sun

**Butterfly Weed**
_Asclepias tuberosa_
Height: 1-1.5’
Blooms May-June
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Moist to dry
Important nectar and host plant for Monarch butterflies

**Common Milkweed**
_Asclepias syriaca_
Height: 2-3’
Blooms June-August
Light: Full sun
Soil: Dry to medium
Can be aggressive
Important nectar and host plant for Monarch butterflies
Some birds will use milkweed fluff for nesting material

**Bee Balm**
_Monarda fistulosa_
Height: 1.5-5’
Blooms June-September
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Dry to medium
Nectar for hummingbirds and butterflies
Hummingbirds love this!

**Blue False Indigo**
_Baptisia australis_
Height: 3-6’
Blooms May-June
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Dry to medium
Nectar and host plant

**Joe Pye Weed**
_Augustus fistulosum_
Height: 5-7’
Blooms July-October
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Medium
A large plant that needs space
Nectar plant, provides seeds for birds

**Seaside Goldenrod**
_Solidago sempervirens_
Height: 2-8’
Blooms July-October
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Medium
Butterflies, bees and hummingbirds love this!

**Wild Columbine**
_Apogelia canadensis_
Height: 2-3’
Blooms April-May
Light: Part shade to shade
Soil: Medium
Butterflies, bees and hummingbirds love this!

**New Jersey Tea**
_Ceanthus americanus_
Height: 3-4’
Blooms May-July
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Dry to medium
Nectar and host plant

**Black-eyed Susan**
_Rudbeckia hirta_
Height: 1-3’
Blooms June-October
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Dry to medium
Nectar and host plant
House finches, chickadees and American goldfinches will feed on seed heads

**Blue False Indigo**
_Baptisia australis_
Height: 3-6’
Blooms May-June
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Dry to medium
Nectar for early pollinators
Best in shady areas but will tolerate sun

**Blazing Star**
_Liatris spicata_
Height: 2-4’
Blooms July-August
Light: Full sun
Soil: Medium (drought tolerant)
Nectar plant for hummingbirds, bees and butterflies
Attracts birds in addition to pollinators

**Seaside Goldenrod**
_Solidago sempervirens_
Height: 2-8’
Blooms July-October
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Medium
Butterflies, bees and hummingbirds love this!

**New Jersey Tea**
_Ceanthus americanus_
Height: 3-4’
Blooms May-July
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Dry to medium
Nectar and host plant

**Winterberry**
_Ilex verticillata_
Height: 3-12’
Blooms June-July
Full sun to part shade
Soil: Medium to wet
Berries are an important food for birds through winter
Make sure to purchase both male and female plants

**Lowbush blueberry**
_Fraccinium angustifolium_
Height: 1-2’
Blooms May
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Medium
Mid-summer berries are relished by humans and birds

**Pagoda Dogwood**
_Cornus alternafolia_
Height: 15-25”
Flowers May-June
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Medium
Many birds love the fruits of this tree

**Little Bluestem**
_Schizachyrium scoparium_
Height: 2-4’
Blooms August-October
Light: Full sun
Soil: Dry to medium
Great seed source for birds, also acts as a host plant

**Spicebush**
_Lindera benzoin_
Height: 6-12’
Blooms March
Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Medium
Host plant for Spicebush swallowtail, birds eat the berries

**Note:** These plants do no establish as quickly as traditional perennials as native plants are not generally available in large sizes. During the first year, plants establish their root systems rather than above-ground biomass.