

Considering Putting In A Pollinator Garden?

Pollinator Gardens are a recent concept. Reminiscent of the Victory Gardens promoted by the government during World War I and II, the Pollinator Garden effort is intended to help cover food shortages, only this time, for insects. The goal of the effort is to provide sufficient food (nectar and pollen) to reverse the decline of pollinators, bees in particular, and to provide habitat (milkweed) for monarch butterflies.



A European honeybee feeds on New England Aster.

Bees, both the European honey bee and native bees, are not only essential for the reproduction of many flowering plants, but are also responsible for pollinating billions of dollars' worth of agricultural crops. Monarch butterflies, although not economically important pollinators, are also a focus of the Pollinator Garden effort due to their popularity and their highly visible and drastic decline (around 90% over 20 years).

Pollinator decline is attributed primarily to loss of habitat and to the use of pesticides. For bees, the Varroa mite and Colony Collapse Disorder are also causes of decline. Habitat loss is due not only to the conversion of prairie and meadow to cropland but also to the use of herbicides that eradicate wildflowers in the agricultural and ornamental landscape. Roundup Ready® crops (crops genetically engineered to be resistant to Roundup®, a non-selective herbicide produced by Monsanto) are of particular concern: weeds, such as milkweed, that once grew in and adjacent to crops and that provided food and habitat for bees and butterflies are now eradicated by broadcast spraying. Neonicotinoids, systemic insecticides, are applied as seed coatings as well as foliar sprays, resulting in bee exposure due to dust drift during planting and to residue in nectar and pollen. Neonicotinoids are also highly soluble in water and therefore have the potential to spread off-site.

Interested in adding pollinator plants to your garden? These links may get you started!

<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/learn-more/vermont-plants/pollinator-friendly-plants>
[Vermont Pollinator Palette w-common names](#)