

## **Creating a Haven for Native Pollinators and Beneficial Insects**

Presented by Brenda C. Adams

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Creating a garden that attracts beneficial insects and supports pollinators – bees, butterflies, lady bugs, lacewings, or hummingbirds – is a rewarding adventure. Not only will these “helpers” make your garden healthier and more productive, they are lots of fun to watch! Best of all, they keep the neighborhood pests in check. Here are a few steps you can take to provide a haven for the good guys.

- Use plants that will burst into bloom as the last of the snow melts away, some that flower throughout summer, and those that are still in bloom when snow returns.
- Incorporate a diverse array of plants with varying heights and a wide range of colors, flower shapes, and sizes.
- Include native plants in your garden. They evolved with native pollinators and are well-suited to meet those pollinators’ needs.
- Add fragrant flowers to attract bees and butterflies. Bee balm and lupine are superb supporters of bees and butterflies.
- Plant in groups. An area of four feet in diameter is best, but if your garden is smaller, don’t worry. They’ll find you if you provide the other ingredients of a welcoming garden.
- Allow spent flowers and herbs to stand in your garden until spring to provide nesting and overwintering sites for adults, larvae, and eggs. Leave a few wild patches for ground-dwelling bees.
- Include a water source such as a shallow bird bath and basking places like rocks and logs.
- Provide cover with dense shrubs, insect hotels or lady bug houses. Try a swallow house – swallows devour mosquitos.

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- Never use pesticides – even organic ones. They kill the beneficial insects along with pests. A few pests in a healthy garden will be kept in balance by your beneficial insects, providing a necessary ingredient in their diet. Ladybug and lacewing larva eat more aphids than do adults. They look like little alligators. Don't squish your most prolific aphid eaters!

Plants that attract *both* ladybugs and lacewings include yarrow, dill, fennel, dandelions (a positive note for a pesky plant!), golden marguerite, coriander and Queen Anne's lace.

Plants that both attract pollinators *and* repel pests include basil, lavender, scented marigolds, nasturtiums, petunias and sun flowers.

For containers on your deck consider these multi-purpose plants that repel mosquitos and are wonderful culinary herbs: lemon grass, mint, sage, rosemary, chives, oregano and thyme.

Then sit back and enjoy the show!

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