

Creating a Backyard Pollinator Habitat



Objective: To provide nectar and larval host plant sources to native pollinator species. Observe how the presence of specific organisms changes in your backyard after your pollinator garden begins to grow.

Background: We often think of conservation efforts as contributing to a larger-scale phenomenon, such as switching to a more sustainable lifestyle or donating to various conservation organizations. However, we can take conservation initiatives in our own backyards! By simply creating a small strip of native plants in your backyard instead of mowing it over you can ensure that your native pollinators have healthy food, a place to nest, and a livable habitat.

Materials: An ideal area in your backyard to plant your garden, seeds of native wildflowers (examples listed below) or plants, mulch or straw, garden tools; **Optional-** you can grow your garden without planting new seeds by simply not mowing the area you select for your garden- native wildflowers will eventually grow on their own!

Procedure:

1. Where Should I Create My Garden?

Any location in your yard with optimal conditions is suitable for your pollinator garden. It is important to remember that your pollinator garden should be in the sunniest spot possible. Pollinating insects need to be warm to be active, so ensuring that your garden is in a sunny location will help them warm up even when temperatures begin to cool.



Educational Farm & Nature Preserve

ODE Common Core Model Tie-In:

*NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list

Grade 1 Life Science

Topic: Basic needs of living things

Concept: Living things have basic needs, which are met by obtaining materials from the physical environment.

Grade 5 Life Science

Topic: Interconnections within ecosystems

Concept: Organisms perform a variety of roles in an ecosystem



2. When Should I Plant my Garden?

Creating your pollinator garden will ideally require a spring start- that way, your garden will be in bloom for the entire pollinator season.

3. What Should be in My Garden?

A general pollinator garden should have brightly colored native flowering plants. There are many native wildflowers to choose from, but some examples of Ohio wildflowers are: Common Milkweed, Blue-Eyed Grass, Butterflyweed, Purple Coneflower and Gray-Headed Coneflower. If you are hoping to attract a specific species, like the Monarch Butterfly, for example, make sure to also plant the larval host plant for that species. It is also important that your garden blooms from early summer through the fall season in order to provide a constant source of nectar for your pollinators, so be sure to choose wildflowers that bloom at various times. And remember to make sure that the plants you choose are all **native** plant species!



Follow Up: The pollinator garden can lead to great critical thinking conversations with students. What would happen if pollinators were not able to visit your garden? How do pollinators benefit from you planting native plant species in your backyard? What role do pollinators play in facilitating plant reproduction?



Creating Connections: How has the creation and advancement of technology resulted in a greater distance between humans and the environment? How has this relationship changed over the past 1,000 years? Over the past 100 years?