

# Pollinator Friendly Plants That Are Easy to Grow

---

*Rose Ellen Schneider, RVACG Secretary and Resident Master Gardener Volunteer*

## Introduction

Flowering plants and their associated pollinators are responsible for the vast majority of our food. Pollinators are also crucial, directly or indirectly, for production of dyes, medicines and some fibers.

Pollinators sustain plant communities by pollinating native plants that provide food, nesting and shelter for wildlife. Bees may be the first pollinators we think of; however, pollinators include butterflies, moths, beetles, hummingbirds, flies and wasps. In North America, 99% of pollinators are insects and of those, most are bees.

Food for pollinators is generally provided by flower pollen and nectar. However, some pollinating insects need specific plants during certain stages of their life cycle, such as monarch caterpillars and milkweed. These are called “host plants” and are a great addition to pollinating gardens.

Allow spaces between clumps of flowers to provide shelter from wind and cold. Add a shallow saucer for water. Put some small rocks in it for perches.

Avoid using weed cloth barrier and heavy mulch since some pollinators nest in the ground.

## Annuals

There are more but these are the easiest to grow. Transplants are the quickest because they are already growing and may be blooming when purchased.

Zinnias - Seeds. (Not the doubles, although I have seen butterflies on the doubles.)

Sweet Alyssum – Transplants. (White is especially attractive.)

Snapdragon - Transplants or seeds.

Sunflower - Seeds.

Marigolds - Transplants or seeds.

Larkspur - Seeds.

Lantana - Transplants.

Cosmos - Seeds or transplants.

Cleome - Seeds or transplants.

Verbena – Transplants.

## Herbs

The larvae of most pollinators love herbs. Dill grows easily from seed. Others I haven't tried but are available in transplants. Examples to try:

Dill

Parsley

Thyme

Cilantro

Other plants are also hosts for the insects and their larvae. In a greenhouse, the plant label will have butterflies or bees on it.

I did not include *perennials* like milkweed, butterfly weed, coneflower, etc. They can be planted if you are planning on a permanent garden that will not be tilled in the fall.