

Things you can do...

Re-define your idea of perfection

- Reduce the amount of lawn in your yard by planting beds of pollen and nectar-bearing shrubs and flowers
 - Reduce time spent mowing
 - Reduce money spent on chemical and water use
- Over-plant your lawn with clover (source of pollen and nectar for bees)
 - Until the 1950s clover was included in grass mixes until the chemical companies determined that if they started calling it a weed they could sell more weed killer
- Leave a dead tree standing (beneficial insects nest in dead wood)
- Leave some areas of your property uncultivated/unmanicured
 - Ground-nesting bees need uncultivated well drained soil morning sun
 - Don't clean everything up over the winter; leave seed heads for the birds and debris for the pollinators to overwinter in

Don't use pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers

- Foster populations of songbirds and beneficial insects to control pests
- Important note about songbirds: 96% of birds feed their babies insects, so using pesticides reduces the number of insects available to birds raising young while increasing levels of toxins in the insects they feed their babies and themselves
- Worms have a high tolerance for toxins from pesticides/herbicides, but when birds eat those worms they get a concentrated dose of toxins and die
- If you MUST use a pesticide use soap spray or neem oil – and spray in the evening after the bees are in for the day
- If you MUST use an herbicide use vinegar
- Make your own compost to use for fertilizer
 - It's easy, clean and has no smell when done properly!
 - Reduce waste in landfill
- Remember – pesticides and herbicides used outside are being tracked into your house on your shoes and your clothes and if you have animals...on their fur and feet
- Those chemicals are being transferred to carpet and upholstery and accumulating year after year

Garden for Beneficials

- Some plants are very attractive to beneficial bugs
 - alyssum
 - hyssop
 - milkweed
 - cup plant
 - showy goldenrod
- Allow some plants to flower and go to seed (plant extra)
 - Broccoli
 - Dill
 - Basil
 - Thyme
- Plant for a succession of pollen and nectar
 - Especially Summer and Fall - see handout
- Water feature
 - Bird bath
 - Pond

Go native

- Use plants native to north east, especially evergreen trees and shrubs (see handout for list of natives)
 - Because they're native, they're able to withstand local stressors, like insect attack, drought and disease
 - They require less work and less money to maintain
- Remove non-natives/invasives you already have (Barberry; multiflora rose; english ivy, purple loosestrife)
 - They displace natives and degrade local eco-system/native pollinator habitat
- Native plants support between up to 50 times as many varieties of indigenous insects and wildlife as non-natives

Foster Bio-diversity

- Plant heirlooms rather than hybrids
- Hybrids have been bred for looks rather than pollen or nectar characteristics, so they might look nice but do nothing to support local pollinators
- Grow squash, sunflowers, blueberries and strawberries every year to maintain resident populations of the specialist bees that serve them

Don't till the soil – use mulch instead

- Tilling Destroys "tilth"
- Breaks down soil structure
- Destroys insects and micro-organisms necessary to healthy soil

Don't use a bug zapper

- Less than 2% of killed bugs are biting flies and mosquitos

On a Global scale...buy organic where possible

- ✓ You'll be supporting farmers who don't use genetically modified seed
- ✓ You'll be aiding the environment by supporting the practice of reduced use of pesticides and herbicides
- ✓ All big grocery chains now carry an array of organic products comparable in price to conventional, both frozen and canned
- ✓ Yuban makes an organic coffee
- ✓ I can't afford to make a 100% switch to organic food, but I can switch for those products I use most of to reduce our exposure to toxins used in conventional agriculture

Resources

Bird Watchers' Digest – good source of information about how to use plants to attract and support birds in your yard.

Brooklyn Botanic Gardens – inexpensive books about native and invasive plants.

Common Sense Pest Control by William Olkowski, book about least toxic pest control methods.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center - lists of native flowering plants and links to local native plant societies. (wildflower.org)

National Wildlife Federation - learn about how to support wildlife, and get your backyard certified as a NWF backyard habitat! (nwf.org)

Mother Earth News – good source of organic and other gardening information. Search on "safe seed pledge" for a list of seed companies selling heirloom non-GMO seeds. (otherearthnews.com)

Organic Gardening Magazine - great source of organic gardening information. (organicgardening.com)

Pollination Home Page - links to information about bees as well as access to regional wild bee expertise. (pollinator.com)

Pollinatorparadise.com - links to great sites about pollinators.

Pollinator Partnership - works to protect the health of managed and native pollinating animals vital to our North American ecosystems and agriculture. (pollinator.org)

USDA Conservation Program - valuable tips on establishing beneficial back yards and creating habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. (nracs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/wildhab.html)

Xerces Society - an international, nonprofit organization that protects wildlife through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitat. Fact sheets on pollinator conservation and also sponsors programs to safeguard the diversity of native insects. (xerces.org)

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