

# Gardening for Pollinators

## You can protect native bees at home!

North Carolina is home to more than 500 species of bees. But many of them don't live in the city, where it can be hard for bees to find the right food and nesting sites. You can help by planting native flowers!



Sweat bee (*Halictus*) on black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

## Here's what you need to know:

- Native plants are best for native bees! Compared to exotic plants, natives:
  - are about 9 times more likely to attract native bees
  - support 3 times more butterfly and moth species, and more birds
- Gardens of at least 10 to 20 plant species attract the most bees. (But it's OK to start small!)
- The ideal pollinator garden has flowers from early spring until first frost. Clumps of flowers of the same species are more attractive than scattered plants.
- The majority of native bee species are solitary and nest in the ground. Leave them a sunny patch of well-drained, bare dirt to dig their nests! Others nest in dead wood and hollow plant stems.
- Avoiding insecticide use, especially during the day and on flowering plants, will help keep bees healthy.
- What's in it for you? More bees visit (and pollinate) vegetable gardens located in yards with more flowers.

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- Unlike honey bees, native bees rarely sting—and their stings are milder.

## Getting started

If you have a sunny patch in your yard or balcony, you can start gardening for bees! Here's how:

1. Remove turf or weeds from your chosen spot, and consider working some compost into the soil.
2. Find a native plant nursery near you: [http://www.ncwildflower.org/native\\_plants/nurseries](http://www.ncwildflower.org/native_plants/nurseries).
3. Plant your new plants—spring and fall are the best times. (Avoid the heat of summer.)
4. Once established, most native plants require no irrigation and minimal pest control! A layer of mulch helps control weeds and keep the soil moist.
5. Most of the plants listed below are easy to find and grow. Together, they flower throughout the season. Most are perennial; they continue to grow back and flower for many years.



Sunflower bee (*Svastra obliqua*) on purple coneflower

| A dozen great natives for bees and other pollinators |                               |                  |                           |   |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Common name  | Latin name                    | Flower color     | Season                    | Notes   |
| 1 Wild indigo  | <i>Baptisia</i> sp.           | white or purple  | mid spring                | an early bloomer to feed spring-active bees       |
| 2 Golden Alexanders                                  | <i>Zizia aurea</i>            | yellow           | late spring               | short-lived perennial; does well in light shade   |
| 3 Purple coneflower                                  | <i>Echinacea purpurea</i>     | magenta + orange | late spring - summer      | a garden classic and bumble-bee magnet            |
| 4 Bee balm, wild bergamot                            | <i>Monarda</i> sp.            | pink-purple      | late spring - late summer | also useful as an herb; leaves are tasty in tea   |
| 5 Black-eyed Susan                                   | <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>        | yellow           | early summer - fall       | easy-to-grow biennial, may bloom the first year   |
| 6 Butterfly milkweed                                 | <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>     | bright orange    | early summer              | watch for monarch caterpillars on the leaves      |
| 7 Swamp milkweed                                     | <i>Asclepias incarnata</i>    | pink             | mid summer                | grows fine in average soil, no swamp required     |
| 8 Rattlesnake master                                 | <i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>   | green-white      | mid summer                | striking, yucca-like foliage                      |
| 9 Joe-pye weed                                       | <i>Eupatorium dubium</i>      | pink             | mid summer - fall         | does well in moist, clay soils                    |
| 10 Showy goldenrod                                   | <i>Solidago speciosa</i>      | yellow           | fall                      | a great source of late-season nectar              |
| 11 Smooth aster                                      | <i>Symphotrichum laeve</i>    | blue-purple      | fall                      | may continue blooming even after frost            |
| 12 Prairie dropseed                                  | <i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i> |                  |                           | clumping grass--for protected nest sites for bees |

**Learn more:** <http://protectpollinators.org> (Pollinator conservation guide and resources, courtesy of Debbie Roos, Chatham County Extension)

*Information in this flier compiled by Elsa Youngsteadt, NC State Entomology, ekyoungs@ncsu.edu*