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## HOME & GARDEN



## How to start a pollinator-friendly garden

Shopping for flowers that require little upkeep, are nice to look at and helpful to Mother Nature's busy critters can be tricky, but Conservation Halton's Brenda Van Ryswyk, natural heritage ecologist, has some tips that can simplify the process and make it hassle-free.

She also has advice on making a watering hole to attract butterflies to your yard, which will make it easier for them to quench their thirst during the hot days of summer.

Follow these steps and you can turn your garden or yard into a pollinator paradise from spring to fall.

Tips for growing and/or buying pollinator-friendly flowers

- If possible, look for non-cultivar varieties or ask sales staff for non-cultivars. Simple flowers are best.
- Many of today's cultivars are bred to be showy with lots of flowers, but they do not produce much nectar, which makes it difficult or unattainable for pollinators to access it, if there is any.
- Avoid buying flowers with pesticides. Be sure to ask the greenhouse if they use them,

as many nursery plants are grown with systematic-pesticides (neonicotinoids) that are harmful to all insects, including visiting bees and would be deadly to any butterfly larva.

• Butterflies like to have a "landing pad," so any large or flat-topped flowers will suffice and are good for them.

• The best place to get pollinator plants is a greenhouse that specializes in native plants. Alternatively, you can collect your own seeds or exchange seeds with other gardeners.

• You can reach out to a local wildflower community such as one associated with the North American Native Plant Society or Seedy Saturdays, for example, to acquire or exchange seeds.

• Get seeds of known origin that are from the local genetic stock, if possible from a nursery (or gardener) that tracks the seed source.

There are guidelines for large-scale collection and seed distribution, so the seed should be local to where it will be planted.

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