

Pollinator Safe Habitat

A Guide to the Creation and Maintenance
of Pollinator Habitat

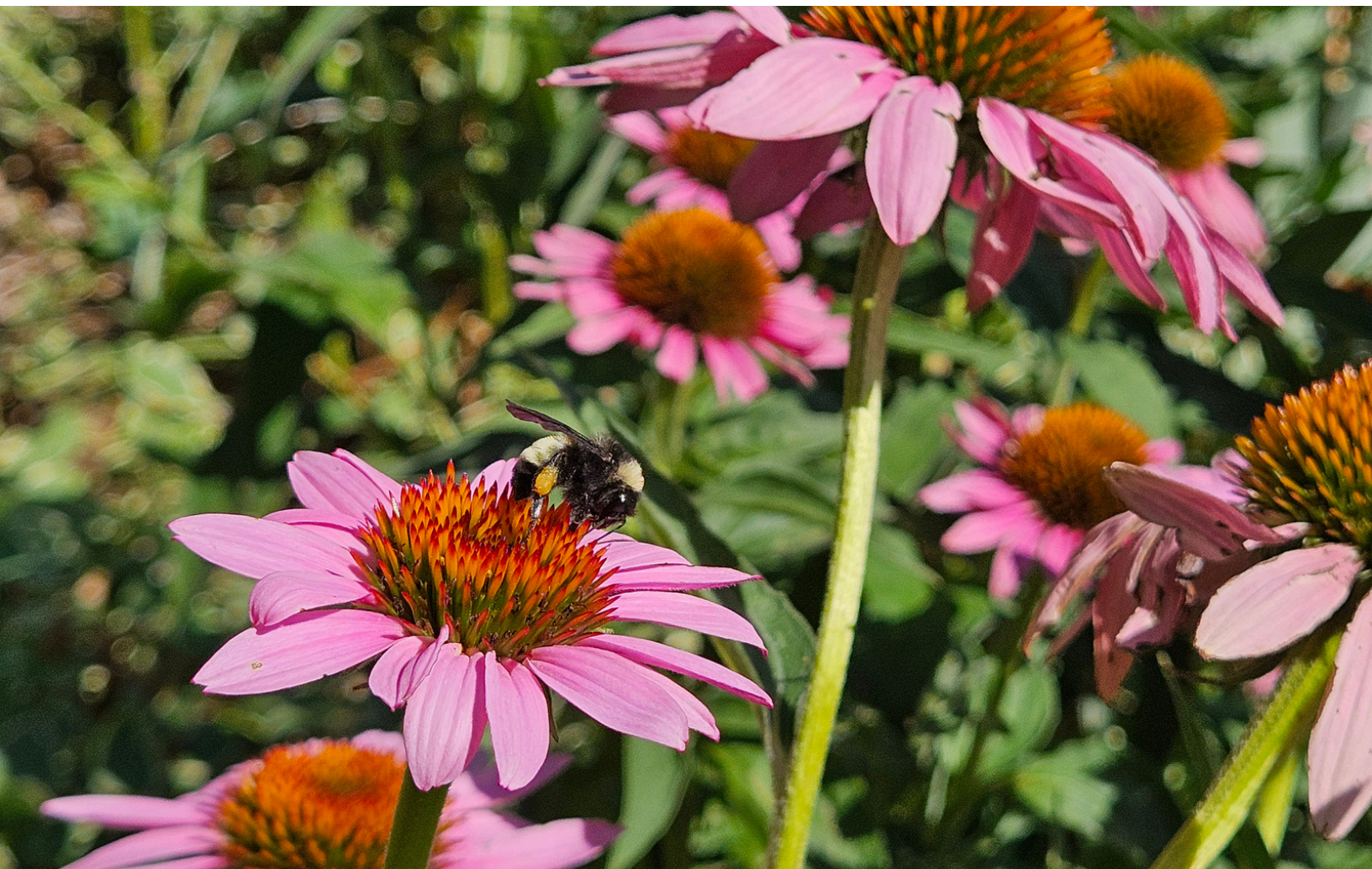
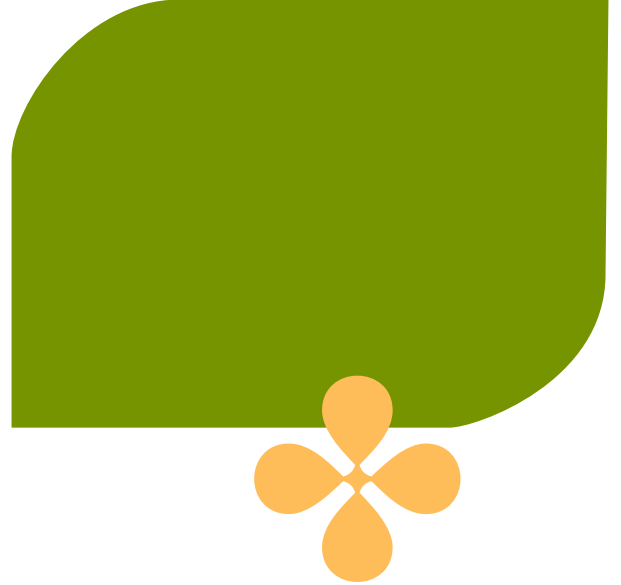


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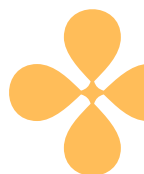
Introduction

Imagine a place where bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds can easily find food and shelter as they take flight. That is the goal of the Wash Park Pollinator Corridor Project, launched by People & Pollinators Action Network (PPAN) and Friends And Neighbors of Washington Park (FANS of Wash Park) and in collaboration with Plant Oasis, Summer Home Garden, Didier Design Studio, Washington Park East Neighborhood Association, and the West Washington Park Neighborhood Association.

By connecting gardens, parks, and green spaces, you can help create safe habitats where these important species can thrive. Whether you have a backyard, a balcony, or just a small patch of land, you can make a difference. Every flower planted and every pesticide-free space helps build a healthier environment—for pollinators and for all of us. Join us and our partners in making Denver a more pollinator-friendly city, one garden at a time!

- [People & Pollinators Action Network \(PPAN\)](#) promotes pollinator-friendly land management and landscaping practices through community education, engagement and advocacy to preserve biodiversity and safeguard public health.
- [Friends And Neighbors of Washington Park \(FANS of Washington Park\)](#) is an advocacy group whose mission is to preserve and enhance the character and safety of Washington Park, Denver, Colorado, through advocacy and education.
- [Plant Oasis](#) has a volunteer and refugee crew that turns Wash Park into an oasis for native plants, butterflies and birds for a fraction of the cost.
- [Summer Home Garden](#) is a Denver public pocket park and garden that inspires and educates gardeners in the Washington Park area to plant native.
- [Didier Design Studio](#) believes landscape is a medium to explore big ideas and create positive change through design.
- [Washington Park East Neighborhood Association \(WPENA\)](#) is the official neighborhood association with the City and County of Denver for residents residing on the east side of Washington Park.
- The [West Washington Park Neighborhood Association \(WWPNA\)](#) is a citizen-based neighborhood organization for the areas bounded by Speer, I-25, Broadway and Marion.

By joining forces, this coalition of organizations plans to create a pollinator corridor throughout the Washington Park neighborhood in Denver, CO. Interested in being a part of the corridor? Ready to get started? Read on and [check out the project webpage here](#).



Join Us!



To create a healthy, thriving and connected Wash Park Pollinator Corridor we require the following actions.

1. **Sign PPAN Pollinator Safe Property Pledge:** this pledge ensures your commitment to creating/maintaining a healthy pollinator habitat by planting pollinator-friendly (native) plants and eliminating pesticide use in maintaining your lawn and garden.
2. **Sign Up to be a part of the Wash Park Pollinator Corridor project:** this sheet will gather information to help track the status and connectivity of the project.

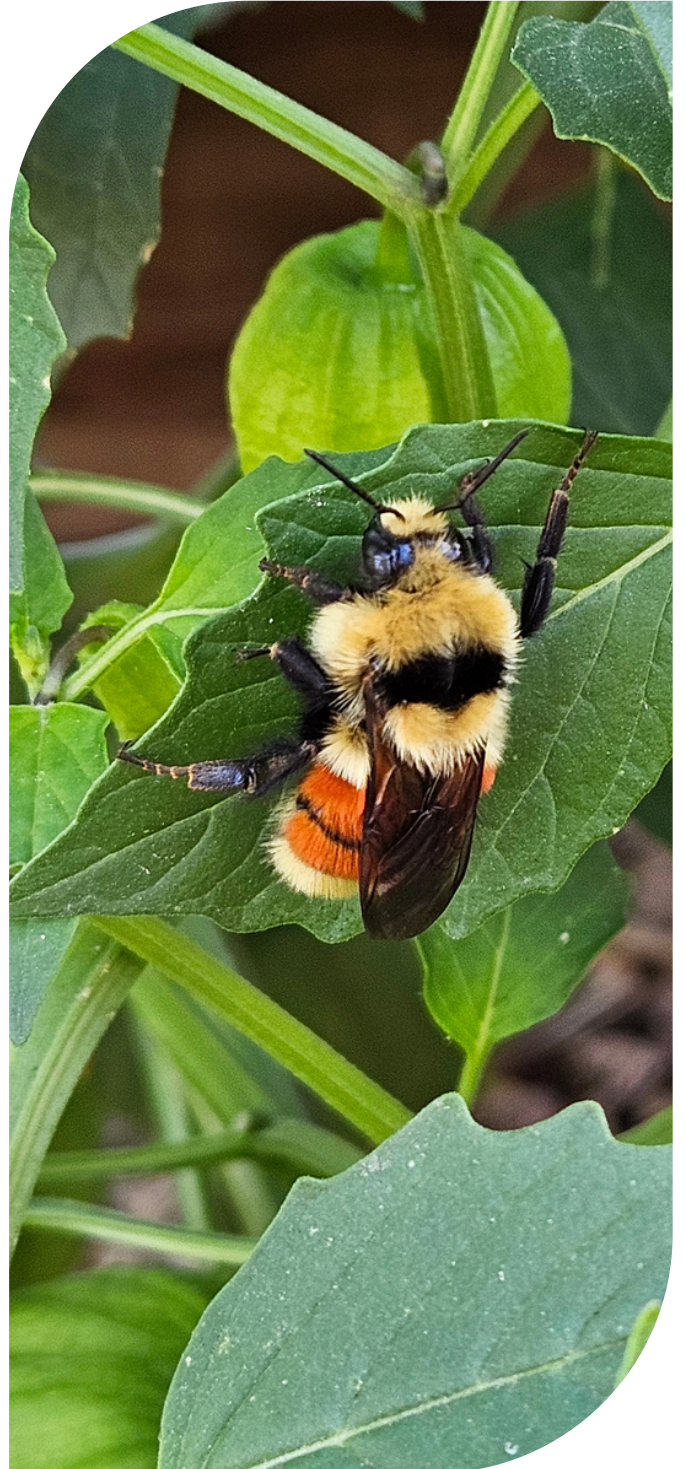
Have any questions? Feel free to reach out to or FANS of Wash Park (washparkpollinatorcorridor@gmail.com) or PPAN (info@peopleandpollinators.org) at any time.



didierdesignstudio



SUMMERHOME GARDEN



What are Pollinators?

Native

Non
Native

Pollinators include a diverse range of species, primarily insects but also birds, bats, and other animals, that play a crucial role in plant reproduction. Many plants rely on these external helpers to transfer pollen from the male to the female parts of the flower. In many cases, insects do this unintentionally while feeding on pollen, helping the plant successfully reproduce.

The honey bee and monarch butterfly are among the most recognizable pollinators, but they are just a small part of a much larger group. Thousands of native bee species, hundreds of butterfly species, and many other insects and birds contribute to pollination in agriculture and natural ecosystems. In fact, there are over 1,000 native species and 250 butterfly species in the state of Colorado alone. Unlike honey bees, which are an introduced species from Europe and are commonly kept in managed hives, most other pollinators are wild, nesting in a variety of natural habitats.

Due to climate change, habitat loss and overuse of pesticides, pollinators are declining at an alarming rate. Planting a pollinator habitat or garden is a simple yet powerful way to support pollinators and biodiversity. These spaces create a vital food source and safe haven for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Even small areas of habitat can make a big difference by offering the resources needed for pollinators to survive and reproduce. Plus, a pollinator garden not only benefits pollinators, but also enhances the health of local ecosystems and even boosts plant growth in your own backyard.





What is Pollinator Habitat?



According to the [Colorado Native Pollinating Insects Health Study](#), a statewide study on the health of native pollinating insects commissioned by the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, creating a pollinator habitat consists of three main categories: **food, shelter, and connectivity**. This includes landscaping with native plants and managing your space organically— all with pollinator health in mind.

Landscaping with Native Plants

You might be wondering—why all the emphasis on native plants? Aren't all flowers beneficial to pollinators? It turns out that not all flowers provide the same benefits! Pollinators like bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds, and bats have evolved alongside native plants in their region, forming specialized relationships over time. Many native pollinators rely on these plants for food and may not even recognize some non-native species as a resource. By choosing native flowers, you are giving pollinators exactly what they need to thrive.

Filling your outdoor space with native plants helps create essential habitat for native pollinators, giving them a better chance to thrive. Plus, native plants are often more resistant to pests, drought, and even fire, making them a low-maintenance and resilient choice for your garden.

Managing Your Space Organically

Pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides harm pollinators—and people too! Even products labeled as pollinator-safe can introduce chemicals into plants, which pollinators then consume through pollen, nectar, and the air.

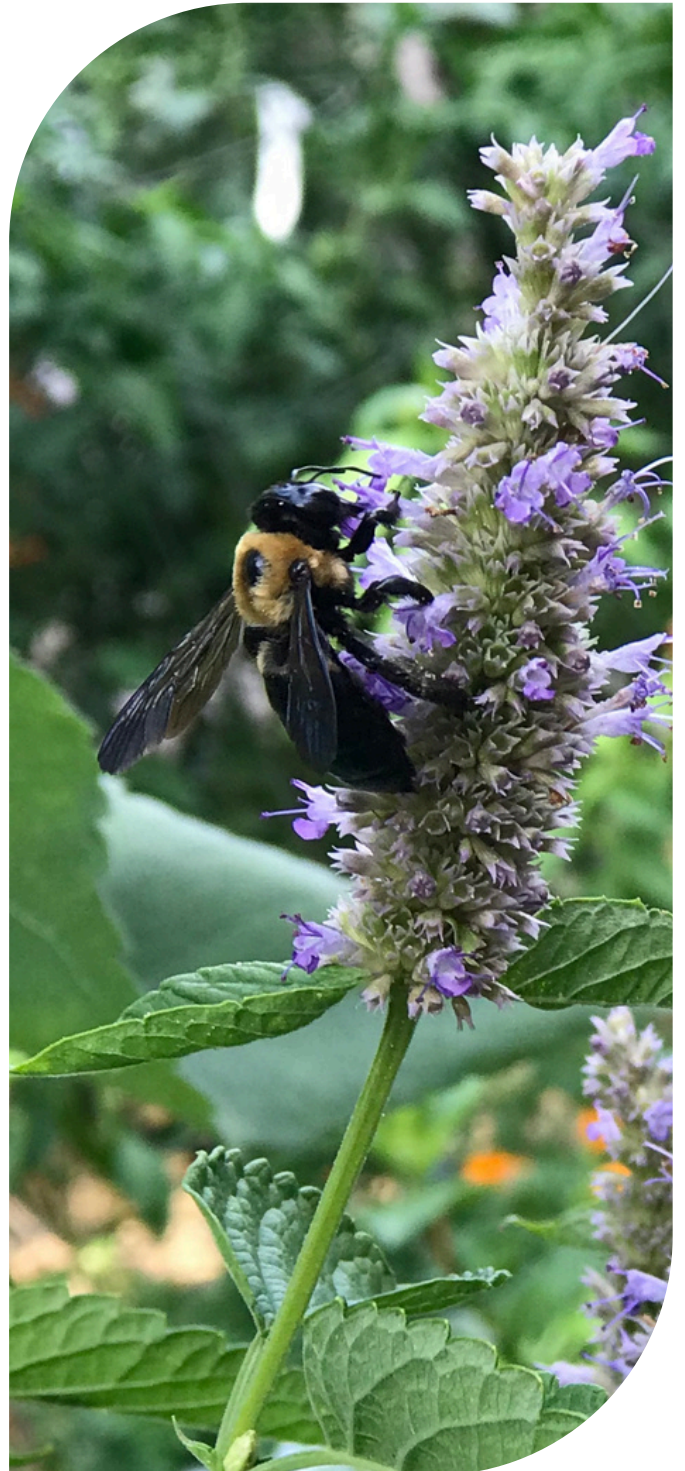
These chemicals can cause serious health issues for pollinators, affecting their ability to navigate, reproduce, and fight off disease. The best way to protect them is by managing your outdoor spaces organically and avoiding harmful pesticides whenever possible. Check out the resources page to find more information on managing your space organically.

What are Pollinator Corridors?

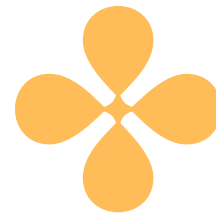


Pollinator corridors are connected habitats that help bees, butterflies, birds, and other pollinators move safely across landscapes. These corridors are made up of gardens, native plants, and natural green spaces that provide food, shelter, and nesting sites. By linking fragmented habitats, pollinator corridors make it easier for pollinators to find the resources they need to thrive. In fact, some pollinators can only fly short distances before needing to “refuel.”

Pollinator corridors are critical in urban and agricultural areas, where development has reduced natural foraging and nesting sites. Supporting pollinator corridors—whether by planting native flowers, reducing pesticide use, or protecting wild spaces—helps ensure healthy ecosystems and stronger biodiversity.



How to Create Healthy Pollinator Habitat



Creating pollinator habitat is a rewarding but gradual process that requires patience and realistic expectations. It is important to understand that newly planted native species often take time to establish, and visible results may not appear right away. In fact, most pollinator-friendly plants will not fully mature or reach their peak bloom until around the third year.

Food

One of the best ways to support pollinators is by making sure they have plenty of food throughout the growing season. A diverse mix of native flowering plants provides nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators, while also creating a beautiful, low-maintenance landscape.

A good rule of thumb? Have at least three different native species blooming at any given time from early spring through fall. This ensures that no matter when pollinators are active, there is always something to feed on. In Colorado, that could look like:

- Spring: Pasqueflower (*Pulsatilla patens*) – One of the first blooms of the season, offering early nectar for native bees.
- Summer: Rocky Mountain Bee Plant (*Cleome serrulata*) – A pollinator magnet that attracts bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.
- Fall: Blue Mist Penstemon (*Penstemon virens*) – Providing a late-season nectar boost before pollinators hibernate or migrate.

But it is not just about nectar! Many pollinators also need specific host plants for their larvae. Monarch butterflies rely on Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*), while swallowtail butterflies use Golden Alexander (*Zizia aurea*) as a food source for their caterpillars. Including a variety of these plants ensures pollinators can complete their life cycles and thrive.

Keeping a fresh bowl of water in your garden is also helpful. Just like us humans, invertebrates also get thirsty! Provide a few rocks that insects can land on. Read on for resources around what native plants may be best for your habitat.



Shelter

Providing shelter is another important way to help pollinators. They need safe places to nest, rest, and overwinter.

One of the easiest ways to create shelter is by leaving things a little messy in the spring and fall. Instead of cutting back all your plants, leave some woody, hollow, or pithy-stemmed vegetation standing. Many native bees nest inside these stems, and they will reuse them season after season. Likewise, leaving leaf litter and plant debris on the ground helps insulate overwintering insects and protects nests from harsh weather.

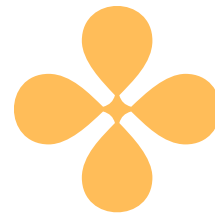
Another important step is to maintain some bare ground. While it might seem counterintuitive, many pollinators—especially native bees—are ground nesters. They dig small tunnels in undisturbed, exposed soil, and if all the ground is covered in mulch or grass, they lose valuable nesting spots.

To truly support pollinators, it is also important to minimize disturbances like mowing and pesticide use across the entire area. These actions can destroy nests and habitat, reducing the number of pollinators that can survive and reproduce. Instead, recognize the potential of existing spaces—whether it is a corner of your yard, a potted plant balcony, or a forgotten patch of land—to serve as a pollinator refuge.

Connectivity

In order to create a sense of habitat connectivity within your space, limit any single management action to no more than one-third of the total habitat area in a given year. This helps maintain habitat stability and reduces the risk of widespread disturbance. Additionally, consider designating a few small patches of land as “disturbance-free zones” to provide continuous refuge for wildlife.

Establishing larger, continuous patches of habitat can support a wider variety of plant and pollinator species, while connecting these patches with corridors—even narrow ones—helps link fragmented habitats. These corridors are essential for maintaining genetic diversity among pollinators and enhancing their resilience to environmental changes and disease.



Remembering that pollinator habitat can be any size, check out some design options from Diddier Design Studio and Plant Oasis for inspiration! Click on each design style below to view a multitude of different types of design.

[illegible]

LAYERED SIGHT LINE

Design methodology — Making plants visible in layers

The diagram illustrates the 'Layered Sight Line' design methodology. It shows a person standing on a sidewalk, looking across a street. The sight line is divided into three layers: a low layer (sidewalk), a middle layer (grass), and a high layer (flowers). The diagram shows how the layers are designed to be visible from the sidewalk.

Resource List

People & Pollinators Action Network (PPAN): feel free to peruse our website for more information on pollinators, their habitat, and other ways to support them. Reach out at info@peopleandpollinators.org if you have any questions.

- Interested in supporting pollinators even further? Get a **Protect Our Pollinators license plate!** Your donation directly goes towards creating pollinator habitat throughout the state.

Oasis Denver & West Wash Park: need help planting? Oasis volunteers and refugee crews help neighbors replace unused grass with native plants for a fraction of the normal cost.

Wild Ones Front Range (WOFR): WOFR empowers Front Range residents to plant and promote native Coloradoscapes for a climate-resilient future. Their website has lots of resources and is a great place to start.

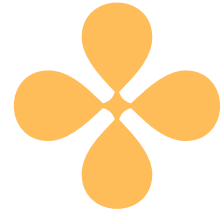
Colorado Native Plant Society (CONPS): CONPS is dedicated to the preservation of native plants in Colorado. Browse their site to discover a wealth of information about Colorado's plants and habitats and methods for native plant gardening.

What should you plant? Check out some of the native plant lists below to determine which plants would best fit your yard.

- **PPAN's Native Plant Recommendations**: all the plants on this list are typically easy to grow and attract an array of pollinators.
- **CONPS WaterWise Native Plant Lists by Region**: based on altitude, these lists have great options for natives that use less water.
- **WOFR Coloradoscaping with Native Plants Toolkit**: this toolkit is designed to empower people to garden with native plants and promote native and sustainable landscapes.
- **Xerces Society Pollinator-Friendly Native Plant Lists**: these regional native plant lists, though not exhaustive, highlight species that have been shown to provide a number of benefits to a diversity of pollinators.

CO Native Pollinating Insects Health Study is a pioneering study documenting what is known about the status of native pollinators, including a wealth of recommendations for conserving pollinators (PPAN championed the legislation that led to the DNR study).

Sources



Armstead, Steve, et al. "Colorado Native Pollinating Insects Health Study." Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Jan. 2024.

"People & Pollinators Action Network." People and Pollinators, 2025, peopleandpollinators.org.

Thank you to Idelle Fisher, Linda Baggus, Anna-Gray Anderson, Sabina Mackay, and Ryan Bartlett for photos.

"Imagine if more people would put in pollinator plants in small or large gardens or even pots. We could create a patchwork of gardens that pollinators can easily find and travel to, and construct longer migration pathways across a highly populated city. Now, imagine there are 1,000s of them that start to work together as one large ecosystem. This is how individual gardens affect climate issues."

-Lisa Negri, SummerHome Garden

