




# CREATING POLLINATOR LAWNS: A FIRST STEP

 Rachel Urick

*Can be both a functioning lawn and a pollinator habitat!*

A **pollinator lawn** is an eco-friendly alternative to traditional turf, designed to support pollinators while still serving as a functional, walkable yard. It combines low-maintenance grasses with low-growing flowering plants - many of which can tolerate moderate to heavy foot traffic and be mowed like a conventional lawn. These plants bloom throughout the growing season, providing essential nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. While native species are ideal for supporting local ecosystems, a pollinator lawn doesn't need to be made up entirely of native plants. In many regions, non-native but non-invasive plants can still offer ecological value and fill niches where native options are unavailable or less suited to lawn conditions.

Managed without pesticides, and with minimal watering or fertilizing, pollinator lawns promote biodiversity, improve soil health, and bring vibrant, sustainable beauty to any landscape.

## Site Selection and Preparation

You don't have to commit to replacing your entire lawn - creating a pollinator lawn can be as simple as adding a few pocket plantings or as ambitious as transforming your full yard. Look for underutilized spaces like rarely used lawn areas, bare patches, or struggling sections. Sunny spots are ideal, but with the right plants, even shadier spots can support pollinators. Site preparation can be as minimal as overseeding your existing lawn with low-growing flowering species, or as involved as removing turf and starting fresh. You could also consider including rock pathways with low-growing natives interspersed into your design - serving as a seed source for your lawn and a bounty to share with friends. Preparation methods may include hand-pulling weeds, smothering with cardboard or mulch, solarizing with clear plastic, or manual dethatching with a rake - all aimed at helping your pollinator friendly lawn thrive.

*Turn lawn patches into opportunities! Overseed or plant plugs for a pollinator-friendly space.*



*Have underused or wide-open spaces? They're perfect for a pollinator lawn!*



# Selecting Plants

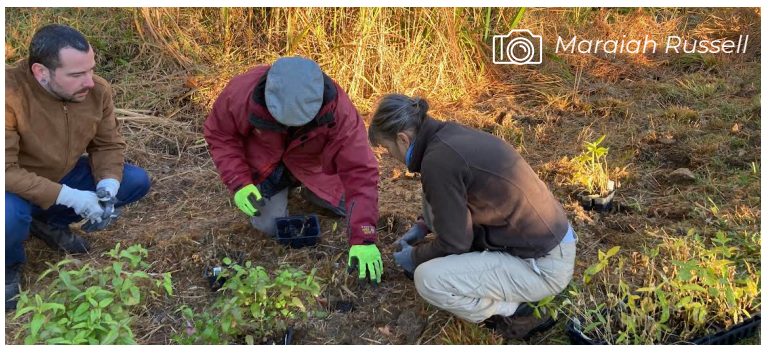
Regionally native plants are well-suited to local conditions, requiring less water and maintenance while supporting local pollinators. In a pollinator lawn, native species are ideal, but non-invasive non-native plants can also provide valuable resources. Common species used for pollinator lawns include clovers (e.g., *Trifolium incarnatum*, *T. repens*), self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), violets (*Viola sororia*), and yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), among others. However, it's important to select plants specific to your region that are non-invasive and suited to your conditions. For the best results, check local native plant nurseries and resources for plant recommendations that will thrive in your landscape and support a diverse range of pollinators.



## Seeding and Planting

### Seeds:

Seeding is the most common and cost-effective way to start a pollinator lawn. For best results, remove grass, weeds, and thatch to expose bare soil. Fall is ideal for many native species, though early spring or dormant winter seeding may work depending on your region. Avoid summer sowing. You can mix seeds with a carrier (like sand) for more even distribution.



### Plugs (Young Plants):

Plugs cost more, but offer instant color and habitat. Fall is ideal for planting, but any season works with steady watering (2–3x/week) in the first year. Water well after planting and during dry spells.

### Tip:

Mix seeds and plugs for a gradual yet colorful lawn transformation.

## Maintain Your Pollinator Lawn



Pollinator lawns need consistent, but minimal, care. Water regularly while establishing, then let nature take over. Mow less often, or use selective mowing leaving some areas (like wet spots or low-traffic zones) unmowed to bloom and go to seed. Rotate mowing zones to avoid bare patches, and raise the lawnmower cutting height to provide additional cover for pollinators. Hand-pull weeds to minimize soil disturbance; weed pressure should decrease over time. Avoid herbicides and fertilizers, and reseed bare spots as needed.

## Helpful Resources



- **University of Minnesota Extension:**  
[extension.umn.edu/landscape-design/planting-and-maintaining-bee-lawn](https://extension.umn.edu/landscape-design/planting-and-maintaining-bee-lawn)
- **Selecting Plants to Support Pollinators:**  
[pollinator.org/shop/brochures](https://pollinator.org/shop/brochures)
- **Ecoregional Planting Guides:**  
[pollinator.org/guides](https://pollinator.org/guides)
- **Pollinator Garden Recipe Cards:**  
[pollinator.org/garden-cards](https://pollinator.org/garden-cards)
- **Pollinator Habitat Guide to Guides:**  
[pollinator.org/pollinator-habitat-guides](https://pollinator.org/pollinator-habitat-guides)



**POLLINATOR  
PARTNERSHIP**

Protect their lives. Preserve ours.