

## Bringing Pollinators Home

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Home gardens and yards come in all sizes and shapes: grass, trees, shrubs, and flowers. But do you see the all-important bees and butterflies in your yard? Perhaps a hummingbird or two, among the other birds? Garden and landscape ideas evolve over time, whether due to climate change, new ideas, or new learning. Using native and eliminating alien plants is increasingly popular and can dramatically improve our environment.

A sterile, well-manicured yard may be pleasing to the eye, but it does not necessarily create a biodiverse environment. An important goal should be to create a healthy, balanced, diverse landscape that can keep pests in check without using chemicals. There are many insects that are good for the yard, and bees and butterflies excel in this capacity.

Bees and butterflies are important to the environment because they serve as pollinators. Pollination is the process of bringing pollen from the male part of a plant to the female part, and it is essential to the survival of all plants. Pollination is also critical to people's ability to get fruit and vegetables. Our gardens need plants that attract pollinators, and also provide them food, shelter and a safe habitat.

Some of the plants we are growing are considered aliens, or not native to our climate. Despite their pleasing appearance, they do not contribute to a healthy environment. Instead, there needs to be a diverse and complex collection of plants, animals, and insect predators feeding off the plants. Native insects will not survive on alien plants. You may wonder, is that bad – do we want insects in our gardens? Absolutely we do, insects are predators naturally keeping the garden healthy and in balance. In other words, there needs to be a wide variety of plants in order to sustain the garden.

Time to plant, but what should be planted to attract pollinators? Goldenrod, *Solidago*, coneflowers *Echinacea*, flowering dogwoods *Cornus*, sunflowers *Helianthus*, Asters, Black-Eyed Susan's *Rudbeckia hirta*, and most importantly: milkweed! Milkweed *Asclepias spp.*, is a primary butterfly attractor. And three different species of milkweed can be planted together, which will provide a continuous display of flowering color in your garden from June through September and attract a variety of beautiful butterflies.

Many of us have planted things as attractors for butterflies; however, the insects also need someplace to reproduce. The plants are not always one and the same. One example is the butterfly bush *Buddleja*. It sounds like the perfect plant, and while butterflies do like to feed in them, no species in North America exist that a butterfly can reproduce on. This was not always the case, but as native plants were eliminated by planting aliens, so went the proper habitat.

Bees as well need proper habitat for reproduction; leaves on the ground or an old bird nest will provide a lovely home.

We are in a drought and we live in a Mediterranean climate. Not the best time to replant your entire yard, but a good time to add drought-tolerant natives here and there. Create an area that will attract the bees and butterflies so critical to a healthy landscape.

Master Gardener classes are offered monthly throughout the county. You can find our class schedule at: [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public\\_Education\\_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698), and recorded classes on many gardening topics here: [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public\\_Education/Classes/](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education/Classes/).

The Sherwood Demonstration Garden is open Friday's and Saturdays from 9 a.m. -noon until March through October. We do close in case of rain, please check our website for details [https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/Demonstration\\_Garden/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Demonstration_Garden/)

Mark your calendar for our annual plant sales in April! Edible plant sale; including fruit, veggies and herbs will be on Saturday, April 16, 2022 8:00AM · 2:00PM. Choose your favorite edibles and shop our incredible tomato selection grown cared for locally by Master Gardener volunteers! The ornamental plant sale will take place on Saturday, April 30, 2022 8:00AM · 2:00PM. We will have a huge selection of trees, shrubs, grasses, succulents, native and perennial plants. Location: Sherwood Demonstration Garden 6699 Campus Drive, Placerville. <http://ucanr.edu/edcsale>

Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard to answer your questions. Leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512, or use the "Ask a Master Gardener" option on our website: [mgeldorado.ucanr.edu](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu). We'll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see [http://ucanr.edu/master\\_gardener\\_e-news](http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news).