Pollination can occur by wind or water, but the work of pollinators is the main way. Pollinators include bees, butterflies, birds, bats and other animals. Pollination is essential to 95% of all flowering plants and 1/3 of all crops grown for people, including citrus fruits, almonds, berries, cotton, milk and even chocolate!

Pollination is the part of a plant’s life cycle required to make seeds so new plants can grow. To create seeds, the plant must have pollen moved from the anther (male) to the stigma (female). Plants attract pollinators with color, shape and fragrance to their food, called nectar.

- Colors like bright blue and violet attract bees. Think asters or blue sage. Hummingbirds zero in on the warm reds and pinks. Butterflies like yellow, orange, pink and red.
- Shapes are key for others. Hummingbirds like tubular flowers. Cardinal flower and butterfly weed allow them to dip their tongues in for nectar. Butterflies appreciate a flat landing pad shape. Coneflowers, viburnum and blazing star allow butterflies to rest and spread their wings.
- Fragrance gains the attention of night pollinators like moths and bats. These ‘night-shift’ workers seek white and pale-colored flowers that glow in moonlight. Examples include evening primrose, garden phlox, wild hydrangea, summersweet and sweetspire.

When the pollinator takes nectar, they also pick up pollen. When the pollinator visits other flowers, the pollen drops off. Without knowing it, the pollinator has completed the important job of pollination.
Got milkweed? It’s the exclusive diet of monarch butterfly caterpillars. But, milkweed isn’t our only host plant. There are other perennials, shrubs and trees. These special plants feed and shelter butterflies throughout their development. Include both host and nectar native plants in protected areas of your landscape. Choose species that bloom across the seasons to support a wide variety of butterflies and other pollinators.

Common Native Host Plants for Butterflies

**Flowers:**
- aster
- black-eyed susan
- butterfly milkweed
- common milkweed
- purple coneflower
- swamp milkweed

**Trees:**
- butternut
- hickory!
- American plum,
-Also…. walnut,
- hazelnut
- elderberry
- persimmon
- pecan

Invasive plant species crowd out native species that support our wildlife. The result? Declining wildlife populations and less diverse plant communities.

When you plant native species you help restore the earth’s healthy plant communities. They didn’t evolve with wildlife, so they don’t support species through their life cycles. Butterflies may like the nectar of butterfly bush. But, their caterpillars are not supported. Same with Bradford pear. Without caterpillars, fledgling birds starve.

Add brilliant reds, golds and oranges with these native trees for fall color:
- black gum
- nuttall oak
- sassafras
- sugar maple
- scarlet oak
- sourwood
- sweet gum
- bald cypress

Choose plants with one of these characteristics to discourage deer and rabbits.
- Spiky, tough stems or thorns.
  - rattlesnake master
  - joe pye weed
  - evening primrose
- Odorous or pungent aroma.
  - yarrow
  - wild beetba
  - wild geranium
- Textured, fuzzy leaves.
  - black-eyed susan
  - coneflower
- Poisonous or bitter tasting.
  - black cohosh
  - eastern red cedar
  - shining bluestar
  - columbine
  - bugbane

A clump-forming plant serves as a filler in your container.
- yarrow
- coneflower
- aster
- tussock sedge

Create a pretty native ‘nature connector’ container with these shapes.

A thriller is a plant with vertical height.
- prairie blazing star
- little bluestem
- prairie dropped

A clump-forming plant serves as a filler in your container.
- yarrow
- coneflower
- aster
- tussock sedge

Finally, a trailing plant or vine to spill over the edge.
- trumpet creeper
- wild strawberry
- wild petunia

Containers are perfect for a small space or for those that prefer a raised planting area. And, once their blooms begin to fade, move these native perennials to a permanent spot in your garden.