



## Planning Pollinator Friendly Gardens

Mid-winter is known for its rainy, cold days with darkness descending by late afternoon. But even with the darkness, there are bright spots. It is a good time to pull back, go within, and plan your 2022 garden. I used to think that gardens were for growing vegetables; but after five years as a WSU Mason County Master Gardener, I realize a garden is so much more.

Now is the time many of us are browsing through plant catalogs looking for plants to enhance our gardens. However, as you are selecting plants, you have an opportunity to go a step beyond. You can select beautiful plants that you will enjoy but will also be preferred by our pollinators.

Eighty-five percent of our plants reproduce due to insect pollination. In return for pollination service, pollinators are rewarded with nectar and pollen. Bees are the most efficient pollinators as they actively seek out pollen to feed their young. Adult bees utilize nectar as a source of energy.

The garden that I am dreaming about for 2022 will have vegetables to eat but will also be filled with flowers for our native pollinators.

Since pollinators play a really important role in the success of your garden, how do we go about creating a pollinator friendly garden?

- We can help pollinators find and use plants by planting them in clumps rather than as single plants. Planting in clumps helps to conserve the pollinators energy and promotes success.
- Include flowering trees. Think how many blossoms cover a broad-leaf flowering tree such as big leaf maple or Pacific dogwood.
- Think native! Our pollinators have coevolved with our native plants over thousands of years. They have adapted strategies for successful pollination. Include plants such as red flowering currant, Oregon grape and broad-leaf lupine.
- Plant a wide variety of plants that bloom from early spring into fall to serve as a food supply for our native pollinators. Bumble bees need to find available food starting in early spring as the Queens emerge. They need food to sustain their colony during the summer months and to feed the new Queens in the late fall before they enter a state of diapause or rest during the winter months.
- Think about the colors you offer the pollinators as you plan your garden. Bees see colors differently than we do. They choose flowers with blue, purple, and yellow petals. They cannot see red.
- Select flowers that are aromatic such as lavender that will favor pollinators.
- Avoid pesticides, in particular the neonicotinoids.

You can learn more about gardening at our annual Through the Garden Gate workshops starting in January. Visit [www.mgfmcc.org](http://www.mgfmcc.org) or call 360-427-9670 ext 682 for details.

Mary Dessel is a WSU Mason County Master Gardener. She chairs the Educational and Outreach committees.

Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension Office. Reasonable accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities and special needs who contact Kendall Carman at 3030 N 4th St. Shelton, WA 98584, (360)427-9670 ext. 682, [kendall.carman@wsu.edu](mailto:kendall.carman@wsu.edu) at least two weeks prior to the event.



February  
Indian Plum



February  
Willow



March-May  
Trillium



March-May  
Oregon Grape



March-May  
Black-eyed Susan



June – July  
Lavender



June – July  
Zucchini



August-Sept  
Borage



August-Sept  
Sunflower



Sept-October  
Purple Aster



Sept-October  
Blue Gentian



October-Nov  
Witch Hazel

✚ Use a wide variety of plants that bloom from early spring into late fall .