



Photos: Diana Colangelo

Welcoming Wildlife to Your Patio Garden

Diana Colangelo, Maryland Master Naturalist

March 23, 2026

Wildlife observed making use of resources on my patio

Butterflies and moths

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

Monarch

Orange Mint Moth

Cabbage White

Red-banded Hairstreak

Gray Hairstreak

Red-spotted Purple

Horace's Duskywing

Hummingbird Clearwing



Bees

Eastern Bumble Bee

Carpenter Bee

3+ Sweat Bee spp.

Hibiscus Bee (*Ptilothrix bombiformis*)

Honey Bee

Megachile Bee sp. (leafcutter bee)

Two-spotted Long-horned Bee

Mammals

Eastern Gray Squirrel

Eastern Chipmunk

Eastern Cottontail

Birds

Northern Cardinal

Tufted Titmouse

American Robin

Gray Catbird

Carolina Wren

Mourning Dove

American Goldfinch

House Finch

Song Sparrow

House Sparrow

European Starling

Carolina Chickadee

Ruby-throated

Hummingbird

Amphibians

American Toad

American Bullfrog

3+ frog spp.



Other critters

Small Milkweed Bug

Lady Beetles (incl. larvae)

3+ beetle spp.

Candy-striped Leafhopper

tiny slugs and snails

Yellow Garden Spider

Funnel Weaver

5+ spider spp.

Earthworm

Fraternal Potter Wasp

2+ wasp spp.

2+ damselfly spp.

3+ caterpillar spp.

Katydid sp.

Margined Calligrapher



Photos: Diana Colangelo



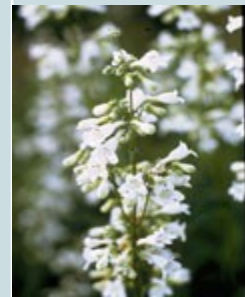
Coastal Plain Joe Pye Weed
Eutrochium dubium



Zigzag Goldenrod
Solidago flexicaulis



Swamp Milkweed
Asclepias incarnata



Foxglove Beardtongue
Penstemon digitalis



Great Blue Lobelia
Lobelia siphilitica



Narrowleaf Mountain Mint
Pycnanthemum tenuifolium



Blue Vervain
Verbena hastata



Crimson-eyed Rose-mallow
Hibiscus moscheutos



White Turtlehead
Chelone glabra



Coral Honeysuckle
Lonicera sempervirens



Eastern Red Columbine
Aquilegia canadensis



Aromatic Aster
Symphotrichum oblongifolium



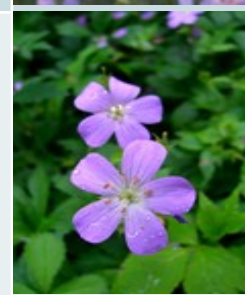
Wild Bergamot / Beebalm
Monarda fistulosa



Wild Blue Phlox
Phlox divaricata



Cardinal Flower
Lobelia cardinalis



Wild Geranium
Geranium maculatum



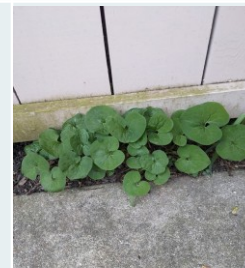
Virginia Spiderwort
Tradescantia virginiana



Orange Coneflower
Rudbeckia fulgida



White Wood Aster
Eurybia divaricata



Wild Ginger
Asarum canadense



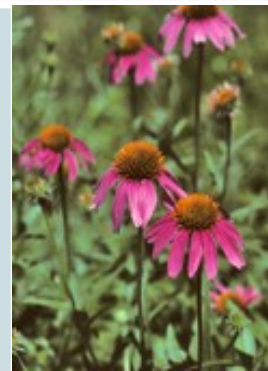
Shaggy Blazing Star
Liatris pilosa



Sensitive Fern
Onoclea sensibilis



Virginia Mountain Mint
Pycnanthemum virginianum



Purple Coneflower
Echinacea purpurea



Woodland Stonecrop
Sedum ternatum



Woodland Sunflower
Helianthus divaricatus



Whorled Coreopsis
Coreopsis verticillata



Little Bluestem
Schizachyrium scoparium

Swamp Milkweed



Carpenter Bee



Hummingbird Clearwing moth



*Eastern Tiger Swallowtail
(dark morph)*

White Turtlehead

Blue Vervain



Sweat Bee



Carpenter Bee



Eastern Bumble Bee



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (dark morph)

Photos: Diana Colangelo

Coastal Joe Pye Weed

Great Blue Lobelia



Sleeping bee!



Sleeping bee!



Wild Bergamot

Narrowleaf Mountain Mint



Orange Mint Moth



Horace's Duskywing



Photos: Diana Colangelo; Bob Webber

Bee Hotels



Keep them small – just a few holes

Location sheltered from rain is best

Replace every year to prevent disease/pests

Leave stems for stem-nesting bees too



Photos: Diana Colangelo, Potter Wasp nest: animalia-life.club

Amphibians



Put pots up on slats for the perfect amphibian homes!



Leave the leaves!



Photos: Diana Colangelo

Mammals



Photo: flickr



Photo: homecadet.com



Photo: Diana Colangelo



Photo: Diana Colangelo



Northern Cardinal



Tufted Titmouse



Gray Catbird



Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Carolina Chickadee



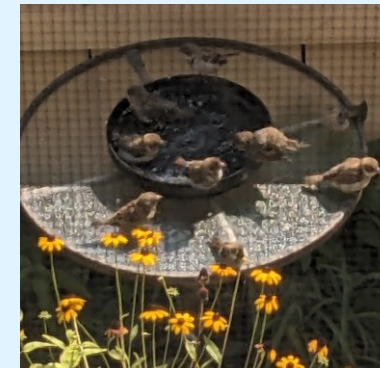
American Robin



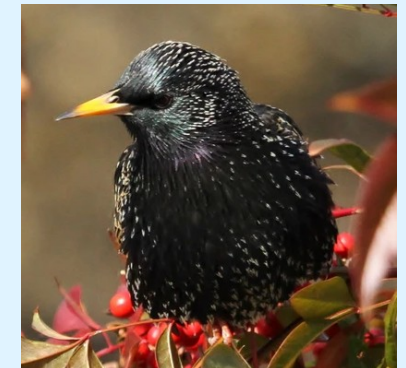
American Goldfinch



Mourning Dove



House Sparrows



European Starling

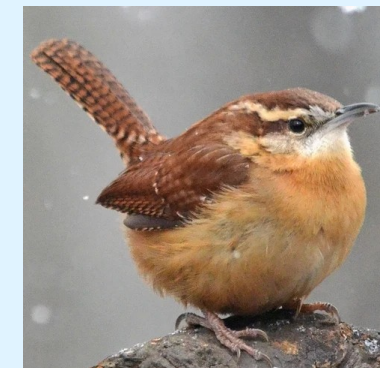
Birds



Song Sparrow



House Finch



Carolina Wren

**Provide
water!**

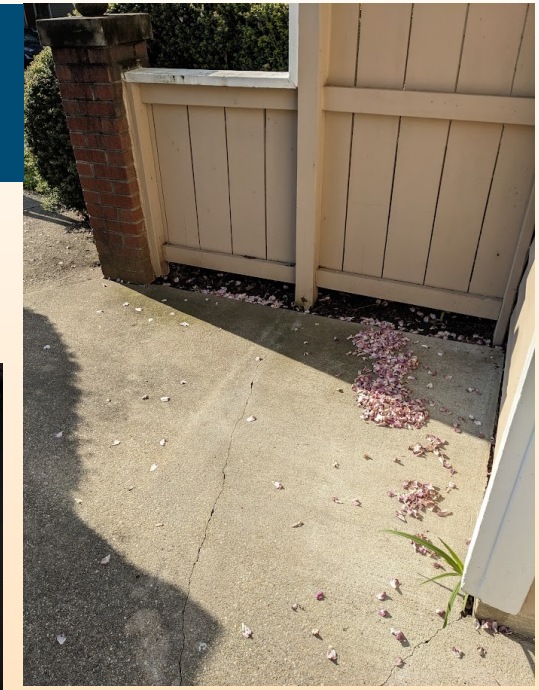
Photos: Audubon.org, House Sparrow photo: Diana Colangelo

GARDENING IN POTS 101



Photo: Diana Colangelo

Sun Study



	west edge 8:00	area right near door	north side	East edge	South edge	South side further in
8:00	✓	✓				✓
8:30	✓	✓	✓ (about half)			✓
9:30	✓	✓	✓ (3/4)			✓
10:30	✓	✓	✓ (except very edge)			✓
11	✓ (only near corner)	✓ (but shadow starting)	✓ (except edge)			✓
11:30	✓ (only near corner)		✓			✓
12			✓	✓ (except ashtray)		✓
12:45			✓ (half) to east only near east edge	✓		✓ (only near east)
1:15				✓		
1:30	no sun					

Time	West edge	Area right near door	North side	East edge	South edge	South side further in
8:00	about 3.5 morning	about 3 morning	about 4, only 2 solid in the middle	about 1	none	about 4
8:30	part shade	shade or part shade	part shade or part sun	shade or full shade	full shade	part shade

Blue...
 ...
 ...
 ...

Choose and Buy Plants

RESOURCES FOR CHOOSING PLANTS

Wildflower.org

National Wildlife Federation

Xerces Society

Audubon Native Plants Database

Homegrown National Park

Maryland Native Plant Society

Wild Ones

Garden for Wildlife
by National Wildlife Federation

Keystone Native Plants

Eastern Temperate Forests – Ecoregion 8

Native plants have tight relationships with wildlife, formed over many thousands of years, providing natural sources of food, cover and places to raise young. Without healthy native plant communities, wildlife cannot survive. Every ecoregion has different native plant communities.

Keystone plants are native plants critical to the food web and necessary for many wildlife species to complete their life cycle. Without keystone plants in the landscape, butterflies, native bees, and birds will not thrive. 96% of our terrestrial birds rely on insects supported by keystone plants.

There are two types of keystone plants:

- Host plants that feed the young caterpillars of approximately 90% of butterflies and moths (Lepidoptera).
- Plants that feed specialist bees who only eat pollen from specific plants. Keystone plants for native bees feed both specialist and generalist bees.

Entomologist Dr. Doug Tallamy, and his University of Delaware research team have identified the keystone plants that support butterfly and moth species. Native host plants of pollen specialist bees were researched by pollinator conservatorist Jarrod Fowler.

Top Keystone Plant Genera in Eastern Temperate Forests – Ecoregion 8

A genus is a taxonomic category of plants that contains one or more species of plants with similar characteristics. Species within each genus have adapted to local conditions and are the appropriate native species or varieties suited to a specific ecoregion.

Plant Type	Plant Genus	Sample of Common Species (not all encompassing)	# Caterpillar Species that Use this as a Host Plant	# of Pollen Specialist Bee species that Rely on this Plant
Trees	Quercus	White oak (<i>Quercus alba</i>), Black oak (<i>Quercus velutina</i>)	936	1
	Prunus	American plum (<i>Prunus americana</i>), Black cherry (<i>Prunus serotina</i>), Chokecherry (<i>Prunus virginiana</i>)	890	1
	Betula	River birch (<i>Betula nigra</i>), Sweet birch (<i>Betula lenta</i>)	284	1
	Populus	Eastern cottonwood (<i>Populus deltoides</i>)	241	1
	Acer	Box elder (<i>Acer negundo</i>), Silver maple (<i>Acer saccharinum</i>), Sugar maple (<i>Acer saccharum</i>)	233	1
	Malus	Southern crabapple (<i>Malus angustifolia</i>)	232	1

RESOURCES FOR BUYING PLANTS

Local native plant sales:
Montgomery County, Muddy Branch Alliance, etc.

Lauren’s Garden Service

Earth Sangha

Bona Terra

Avoid big box stores. Ask nurseries if plants are grown without systemic neonicotinoids.

Buy straight species and local ecotypes when possible.

NATIVE PLANTS FOR POLLINATORS & BENEFICIAL INSECTS: Mid-Atlantic



LEFT—Ptilothrix bombiformis, a hibiscus specialist bee, drinks nectar inside a Hibiscus moscheutos flower. RIGHT—Bumble bee on Cercis canadensis.

Plant Selection

These plants are attractive to a diversity of pollinators, providing pollen and nectar to bees, butterflies, flies, beetles, wasps, and moths. Some plants provide additional resources as caterpillar host plants or nesting sites and nesting materials for above-ground nesting bees. Many support specialist bees that require pollen from specific plants to survive and supplement beneficial insects that can help control pests of ornamental and crop plants. These plants are native to this region—determine if a species is native in your area at plants.usda.gov—and can be used to create or enhance pollinator habitat across rural and urban landscapes.

When purchasing plants, let your local garden center or nursery know you want plant material free of pesticides that may harm pollinators.

Resources

- ➔ Pollinator Conservation Resource Center: xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center
- ➔ Bring Back The Pollinators: BringBackThePollinators.org
- ➔ Reducing Pesticide Use & Impacts: xerces.org/pesticides

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	BLOOM	LIFE	FORM	SUN	SOIL	ADDITIONAL DETAILS
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red maple	Mar-Apr	P	🌳	☀️	W	🐝🐛🐜
<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i>	Canadian serviceberry	Apr-Mar	P	🌳	☀️	M	🐝🐛🐜

Buy Soil

AVOID PEAT!

Peatlands cover only 3% - 4% of Earth's land surface but store 30% of global soil carbon (twice as much as all forests combined)

Harvesting releases tons of greenhouse gases

Peatlands filter water, protect against flooding, and provide unique habitat.

<https://www.greenmatch.co.uk/blog/why-is-peat-bad-for-the-environment>



Find or Buy Pots

Recommend plastic for moisture retention

Terra cotta will dry out quickly

Glazed ceramic is ok, but expensive

Experiment with different types of containers at secondhand stores that you can drill holes in (laundry tubs, closet organizers)

Ask neighbors/friends, post on listservs



Daily Care and Maintenance

May need to water daily, esp. in extreme heat and if your space is sunny

Don't love your plants to death!

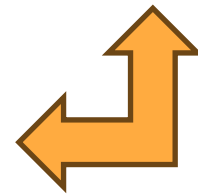
Take a wait and see approach with "pests"

If you see earthworms on your patio, put them in your pots!



Overwintering

If your patio is very exposed or sunny, you might consider watering a couple times (though I do not water in winter)



Top-dress with a layer of leaves

Leave stems for bees

Challenges

PLASTIC

Get creative with pots
(previous slide)

Reuse soil bags as trash bags

For disposable pots that plants
come in, return to nurseries
like Bona Terra or use as filler
in large pots

MOSQUITOES

Try “bucket of doom” (tough
on patios because always
damp)

Sprinkle mosquito bits around

Look into trap below

Bee Safe Mosquito Control

WATERING

If no exterior access to water,
it’s work!

Cannot leave plants unwatered
for more than a few days



Mosquito Control

Mosquito Traps

Accessories & Parts

Rewards

More

Contact



BG-Mosquitaire CO2 Outdoor Mosquito Trap Bundle

\$299.00

★★★★★ 4.67 | 15 reviews

4 interest-free installments, or from **\$26.99**/mo with [shop Pay](#)

[Check your purchasing power](#)

Final Thoughts

Don't be afraid to experiment

Create a habitat, not just a garden

Use it as a teaching tool for kids

Have fun - this should bring you joy!

Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good



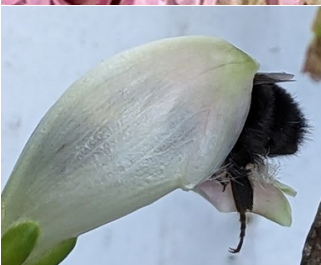
Photos: Diana Colangelo

**Turn a
gray
space...**





GREEN!



Photos: Diana Colangelo

Thank you!

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Photo: Diana Colangelo