

THE BEST POLLINATOR PLANTS FOR SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY

Jesse Connor for the South Jersey Butterfly Project
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The native perennials, shrubs, and trees listed below all provide nectar and/or pollen for local pollinators including bees, wasps, beetles, butterflies, moths, and flies. Nearly all are also host plants for Lepidoptera (MHP = Moth Host Plant; BHP = Butterfly Host Plant). Host plants are crucially important because they provide ecosystem services that are essential to a fully-functioning landscape.

NATIVE POLLINATOR PLANTS

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	MHP, BHP	SEASON OF BLOOM
NATIVE PERENNIALS			
ANISE HYSSOP	<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>	MHP	June July
ASTERS	<i>A. oblongifolius</i> , <i>Symphytotrichium laevis</i> , <i>S. novae-angliae</i>	MHP BHP	Aug Sep Oct
BEE BALMS	<i>Monarda didyma</i> , <i>M. fistulosa</i>	MHP	June July Aug
BLAZING STAR	<i>Liatris spicata</i> , <i>L. graminifolia</i> ,	MHP	July Aug Sep
BLUE MISTFLOWER	<i>Conoclinium coelestinum</i>	MHP	Aug Sep Oct
BLUE WILD INDIGO	<i>Baptisia australis</i>	BHP	May June
MILKWEEDS	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i> , <i>A. syriaca</i> , <i>A. tuberosa</i>	MHP BHP	May June July Aug
COLUMBINE	<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>		Apr May June
CUTLEAF CONEFLOWER	<i>Rudbeckia lacinata</i> , <i>R. nitida</i>	MHP	July Aug Sep
FALSE SUNFLOWER	<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i>	MHP	June July Aug Sep
FOXGLOVE BEARDTONGUE	<i>Penstemon digitalis</i>	MHP	June July
GOLDENRODS	<i>Solidago canadensis</i> , <i>S. flexicaulis</i> , <i>S. nemoralis</i> , <i>S. sempervirens</i> , <i>S. rugosa</i>	MHP	Aug Sep
JOE-PYE WEEDS	<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i> , <i>E. perfoliatum</i> , <i>E. purpureum</i> , <i>E. serotinum</i> , <i>Eutrochium dubium</i>	MHP	July Aug Sep
MOUNTAIN MINT	<i>Pycnanthemum</i> spp		July Aug Sep Oct
NEW YORK IRONWEED	<i>Vernonia noveboracensis</i>	MHP	Aug Sep
PHLOX	<i>Phlox paniculata</i> , <i>P. pilosa</i>	MHP	June July Aug
PURPLE CONEFLOWER	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	MHP	June July Aug
VERVAINS	<i>Verbena hastata</i> , <i>V. stricta</i>	MHP	July Aug Sep
WILD GERANIUM	<i>Geranium maculatum</i>	MHP	May June
WILD QUININE	<i>Parthenium integrifolium</i>	MHP	July Aug
NATIVE SHRUBS			
BEACH PLUM	<i>Prunus maritima</i>	MHP	Apr May
CHOKEBERRIES	<i>Aronia arbutifolia</i> , <i>A. melanocarpa</i>	MHP	Apr May
DOGWOODS	<i>Cornus amomum</i> , <i>C. racemose</i> , <i>C. sericea</i> , <i>C. alternifolia</i>	MHP	May June
GROUNDSEL BUSH	<i>Baccharis halimifolia</i>		Aug Sep
HIGHBUSH BLUEBERRY	<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i> , <i>Vaccinium</i> spp	MHP BHP	Apr May
INKBERRY HOLLY	<i>Ilex glabra</i>	MHP BHP	May June
MEADOWSWEET	<i>Spiraea alba</i>	MHP	May June
NEW JERSEY TEA	<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>	MHP	June July
NINEBARK	<i>Physocarpus opulifolia</i>	MHP	May June
SHADBUSH	<i>Amelanchier</i> spp	MHP	Apr May
SWEET PEPPERBUSH	<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	MHP	June July
SWEETSPIRE	<i>Itea virginica</i>	MHP	May June

VIBURNUMS	Viburnum acerifolium, V. dentatum, V. nudum, V. prunifolium	MHP BHP	May June
WILLOWS	Salix spp	MHP BHP	Apr
NATIVE TREES			
AMERICAN HOLLY	Ilex opaca	MHP BHP	May June
BASSWOOD	Tilia americana	MHP BHP	June
BLACK CHERRY	Prunus serotina	MHP BHP	May June
BLACK LOCUST	Robinia pseudoacacia	MHP BHP	June
CRABAPPLE	Malus angustifolia	MHP	Apr May
EASTERN REDBUD	Cercis canadensis	MHP BHP	Apr May
RED MAPLE	Acer rubrum	MHP	March April
TUPELO (BLACK GUM)	Nyssa sylvatica	MHP	May June
TULIP TREE	Liriodendron tulipifera	MHP BHP	May June

ACCEPTABLE NON-NATIVE, NON-INVASIVE PERENNIALS that are especially beneficial to pollinators: Sedum spectabalis, Chives, Lavender, and Oregano.

ACCEPTABLE NON-NATIVE, NON-INVASIVE ANNUALS that are especially beneficial to pollinators: Pentas, Brazilian verbena, Globe amaranth, Mexican sunflower, old-fashioned zinnias. NOTE: Some non-native lawn weeds -- white clover, for example -- provide nectar and pollen early in the spring. We can manage our lawns with this in mind by raising lawnmower height to the recommended 3"– 4".

A COMPLETE LIST? I have included only those plants that occur naturally or are relatively easy to purchase, and can be grown in a typical garden. Not included are some excellent pollinator plants that require wet soil – e.g. buttonbush, pickerelweed, and jewelweed.

Also not included are several plants that can be found too often in lists of pollinator plants in books, magazines, and websites that seem to have been copied from sources that date back to a time when butterfly-gardening was just beginning. Shasta daisy, yarrow, and marigolds, for example, can be found on many of these lists, although none of them is native and, none, in my experience, at least, is a good pollinator plant. One of the goals of the SJBF Project is to promote gardening for butterflies through the development and dissemination of accurate information. I welcome your observations and suggestions. Please send them to jesseconnor@gmail.com with the word "pollinator" in the subject line.

CAUTIONARY NOTE ABOUT NEONICOTINOIDS: It is difficult to find native plants in big box stores (and even some nurseries) and sometimes impossible to learn what insecticides were used on them. It's best to track down nurseries where you can talk to the growers directly. Be sure to ask about insecticide applications. Neonicotinoids are systemic insecticides. Plants treated with them will kill both caterpillars and adult butterflies

SOURCES:

South Jersey Butterfly Project, www.blogs.stockton.edu/sjbfs/
Attracting Native Pollinators by the Xerces Society (Storey Publishing, 2011)
Bees: An Identification & Native Plant Foraging Guide by Heather Holm (Pollination Press, 2017)
Bringing Nature Home by Douglas W. Tallamy (Timber Press, 2007)
Butterflies of New Jersey: A Guide to Their Status, Distribution, Conservation & Appreciation by Michael Gochfeld and Joanna Burger (Rutgers University Press, 1997)
Butterflies of the East Coast: An Observer's Guide by Rich Cech and Guy Tudor (Princeton University Press, 2005)
Caterpillars of Eastern North America by David L. Wagner (Princeton University Press, 2005)
The Living Landscape by Rick Darke and Doug Tallamy (Timber Press, 2014)