

GARDENING GUIDE 04

Native Planting

Pollinator

Support KC's native bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds with a corridor of the right plants.

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Why native pollinators

Missouri is home to more than 450 native bee species — most of them solitary, none of them aggressive, and all of them more efficient pollinators than honey bees for the plants that evolved here. Support them and your vegetable garden yields go up 20–40%.

The starter list

These twelve species will bloom in staggered succession from March to October and support the widest range of pollinators.

- Spring: golden alexanders, wild geranium, Virginia bluebells
- Early summer: purple coneflower, wild bergamot, butterfly milkweed
- Midsummer: rattlesnake master, mountain mint, blazing star
- Late summer: cup plant, aromatic aster, showy goldenrod

Design principles

Plant in drifts of 3–5 of the same species so pollinators can "see" them from the air. Aim for at least three species blooming at any given time. Leave 30% of your soil un-mulched — 70% of native bees nest in the ground.

What to avoid

- Neonicotinoid pesticides — check plant tags at big-box stores
- Cultivars bred for double flowers — they usually have no pollen
- Fall garden "cleanup" — leaves and stems shelter overwintering bees

Local sources

Missouri Wildflowers Nursery (Jefferson City), Prairie Star Restorations, and the Deep Roots KC plant sale (annually in May) all offer neonic-free, locally sourced natives.