



## POLLINATOR PLANTS FROM THE “PRAIRIE GLACIAL PLAINS” AT MIDEWIN

Considering plants for your 2020 pollinator garden? When thinking about pollinator plants – species that attract butterflies, bees, moths, caterpillars, birds and other pollinators –milkweed usually first comes to mind. There are so many more native Illinois pollinator plants available, and a variety of prairie pollinator plants in your garden will attract more species of pollinators.

Ecologists have judiciously strategized a recipe of some 160 plants for restoring the [Prairie Glacial Plains](#). These are just some of the 275 different species of plants that are part of restoration projects at Midewin. In 2016, the Prairie Glacial Plains, an area on the west side of Midewin, was dedicated for seven years of accelerated restoration. Hearts and hands involved in this concentrated restoration focus are with the USDA Forest Service, The Wetlands Initiative, The Nature Conservancy & the National Forest Foundation.

Below is a list of some of the pollinator plants from the Prairie Glacial Plains restoration project. These plants will provide an array of heights to your prairie pollinator garden while dazzling with a variance of bloom times throughout the season.

NATIVE PRAIRIE POLLINATOR PLANTS – PRAIRIE GLACIAL PLAINS / MIDEWIN				
POLLINATOR PLANT	WHY?	GROWING INFO	HEIGHT	BLOOM TIME
Boneset (common)	The nectar & pollen of the tiny white flowers of common boneset is a favorite of bees, butterflies, beetles & insects of other varieties. It is also loved by moths, including the lined ruby tiger, blackberry looper moths & more.	Full or partial sun; wet or moist soil	2-4 feet	Late summer to early fall

Butterfly weed	While the bright orange color of the flowers attract a wide variety of pollinators, including even the ruby-throated hummingbird and more, the nectar of the flowers attracts a variety of bees; as well as monarchs, swallowtails and other butterflies. Butterfly weed also attracts many different bugs, moths & butterfly larvae.	Full sun; dry or mesic; rocky or sandy and acidic soil	1-2 feet	Early- to mid-summer
Cardinal flower	With its striking red blooms, cardinal flower attracts a variety of pollinators.	Full sun to light shade; moist or wet soil	3-6 feet	July to October
Cinquefoil (prairie)	With its white-green colors, prairie cinquefoil attracts an array of pollinators. Its flower nectar and pollen attracts small bees, and the larvae of some small insects, including some grasshoppers find food on the leaves.	Full sun; dry or mesic conditions. Adaptable to a wide variety of soil conditions.	1-3 feet	Mid-summer for about one month
Compass plant	Craning well above other plants with its bright yellow colors, compass plant is a stand-out pollinator that shouts “prairie” to knowledgeable enthusiasts, even from a distance. The leaves of the compass plant grow vertically north to south, which is how they provided	Full sun; moist to slightly dry and loamy, deep soil. Plant on flat ground to help avoid drooping.	12 feet	Mid-summer for about six weeks

	direction to plant-savvy settlers in the 1800s. Limit the number of compass plants in your garden to just one or two- it will help narrow the chances of this large plant overwhelming other plants while still giving your garden the look and feel of a prairie.			
Coreopsis (prairie)	The bright orange-yellow flowers of prairie coreopsis are some of the first to bloom.	Full sun; mesic to dry-mesic; clay-loam or loamy soil, sandy loam or gravelly soil	2 feet	June through August
Culver's root	Culver's root is a member of the snapdragon family. Its flowers grow in an arrangement that resembles a decorative candelabra. Mason bees bumble bees, honey bees and other long- and short-tongued bees are attracted to its nectar; also butterflies, moths and a variety of insects	Full or part sun; moist or average; grows best in loamy and rich soil	5 feet	June to September,
Cylindrical blazing star	A member of the aster family, the purple colors of cylindrical blazing star flowers are as brilliant as its cousin the New England aster. The nectar is favored by	Full sun and dry conditions with poor soil	1-2 feet	July to September

	butterflies, bees, as well as bee flies and skippers. The seeds and flowers attract the rare glorious flower moth caterpillars.			
Milkweed (prairie)	Of all the rosy or purplish/pink or brown blooms, only a few flowers are pollinated, which is how those recognizable large pods filled with silky, plummy seeds take shape. You can also tell milkweed by its white sap. While the flowers draw in a wide array of pollinators, only a few insects can eat milkweed leaves – including the larvae of the very popular monarch butterfly. Also known as Sullivant’s milkweed.	Full sun; mesic or moist; loamy, rich soil	2-3 feet	Early- to mid-summer
Milkweed (swamp)	One of the only milkweeds that grows well in wetland areas, swamp milkweed can attract a wide array of pollinators of all kinds to areas around ponds, marshes, streams & more.	Full sun; medium to wet soils	2-6 feet	Late summer for about one month
Milkweed (whorled)	Whorled milkweed is identifiable by its leaves, which are noticeably narrower than the leaves of other milkweeds.	Full sun; soil with good drainage	½-2 feet	June to September

Mountain mint (common)	Pretty, delicate, white blooms of mountain mint attracts a variety of pollinators.	Full sun; tolerates shade	3 feet	June into September
New England aster	The hearty bright purple blooms of the New England aster have stark, vibrant centers. The nectar is a favorite of bees, including bumble, miner and leaf-cutter bees & also bee flies. Butterfly & moth caterpillars, as well as lace and plant bugs, love to eat the leaves and stems.	Full or partial sun; rich, moist soil	4-6 feet	late summer to fall for about two months
Old-field goldenrod	A member of the aster family, the bright, cheerful blooms of old-field goldenrod add lively pops of yellow colors that attract a wide variety of bees, butterflies, beetles & more.	Full sun and dry-mesic to dry soil	3 feet	Mid- to late-summer for about 4-6 weeks
Pale purple coneflower	Widely known as echinacea, this member of the sturdy aster family provides soft pops of light pinks & purples that attract pollinators.	Full sun; average or dry soil; can droop with too much water	3½ feet	May to August
Partridge pea (common)	A variety of bees, insects, butterflies and other pollinators are attracted to the perky yellow blooms of partridge pea.	Full sun; dry-average black or mesic conditions	1½-2 feet	Mid-summer to fall
Purple prairie clover	A purple wreath of flowers attracts an array of pollinators, including insects, bees, butterflies & even hummingbirds.	Full shade; dry soil	¾-3 feet	Early to mid-summer; for about 4-6 weeks

Rough blazing star	The stunning purple hues of rough blazing star flowers are popular with bees, butterflies, skippers, caterpillars, bee flies and more.	Full sun; dry or mesic conditions	4 feet	Late summer to early fall for about 3 weeks
Savanna blazing star	Monarch butterflies, in particular, are attracted to the stunning purple blooms of savanna blazing star.	Full sun or partial sun; mesic or moist soil	2/5-5 feet	Late summer to mid-fall for about 6 weeks
Spiderwort (common)	The brilliant purple blooms of spiderwort attract a variety of pollinators, particularly several different species of bees.	Sun to partial shade; partially dry to moist soil (tolerates wet)	Up to 3 feet	Late spring to mid-summer for about 6 weeks
Sweet Black-eyed Susan	With its dark brown centers and robust yellow petals this member of the hearty aster family is an icon of the prairies when in bloom. The flowers attract a wide array of bugs, moths, butterflies, bees & other pollinators.	Full sun; medium clay soils	Up to 48 inches	July through September
Western sunflower	The crisp bright yellow flowers of western sunflowers draw interest from bees, beetles, some butterflies, grasshoppers & more.	Full sun; sandy soil; mesic to dry soil	2-4 feet	Mid-summer to early-fall for about one month
Wild senna	Yellow flowers attract bees & more. At the base of each leafstalk is a tiny, club-shaped gland that produces nectar. The nectar attracts ants, ladybird beetles	Sunny or partly shaded areas; soil with good drainage	Up to 6 feet	July to August

	and more. A variety of butterfly species and moth larvae feast on the foliage.			
Yellow coneflower	Extend the season with yellow coneflower- it attracts a variety of pollinators with its hearty, bright yellow blooms from July all the way through October.	Grows best in loamy, clay and sandy soils; dry or medium moisture.	2-4 feet	July through October

If you are interested in learning more about these and other native Illinois prairie pollinator plants, the Midewin Interpretive Association, provides an array of resources in the Midewin Welcome Center.

On Saturday, May 2 at 2 p.m., the Midewin Interpretive Association, as well as Midewin staff and volunteers, will lead a community planting activity as part of Midewin’s annual “Spring into The Prairie” event, which is part of the Illinois Route 66 Red Carpet Corridor Festival. Information on native Illinois prairie pollinators will be presented before the planting activity. To register, call 815-423-6370 or e-mail [SM.FS.Midewin\\_RSVP@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.Midewin_RSVP@usda.gov).



**Forest  
Service**

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