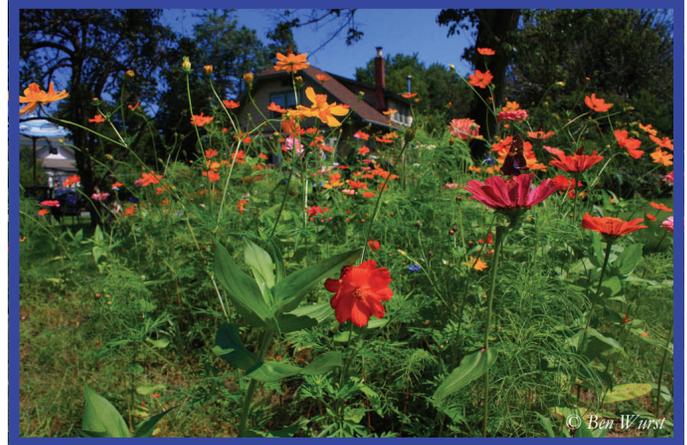


CONSERVE WILDLIFE FOUNDATION OF NEW JERSEY

LANDSCAPING FOR WILDLIFE: CREATING BACKYARD HABITAT

WILDFLOWERS

Simply put, gardens that contain wildflowers are good for wildlife and the environment. They attract beneficial insects and birds, including butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. They also replace and fragment the wide spread monoculture of cool-season grasses that are found throughout the United States. Cool-season grasses cost time, money, and energy to maintain and provide little habitat for wildlife. While, wildflower gardens increase biodiversity of wildlife by providing both food and cover in your backyard. Native wildflowers can also survive severe droughty periods and need little to no maintenance once established. There is also little need for pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers.



A small wildflower garden in a backyard.

Creating a wildflower garden is as easy as choosing to not mow a portion of your yard. Eventually the site will colonize with native grasses and wildflowers or you can choose to sow native wildflower seeds to help establish a variety of nectar producing plants for wildlife. Here we will outline the process of how-to create a wildflower garden in your own backyard.

HOW TO CREATE A WILDFLOWER GARDEN:

1. Choose a seed mix that is specially formulated for the area where you live. We are considered to be part of the Northeast. Make sure it has a mix of both annuals and perennials so you get some flowers during the first year after establishing the garden.
2. Select a site that meets the minimum amount of sun light required (*see seed packet*). Generally, the more the better for most wildflowers. An adequate location is where it faces south-southwest and gets full sun for most of the day during the growing season.
3. Measure and mark the outline or the perimeter of the garden. A garden in my backyard is approximately 25 feet long by 5 feet wide.
4. Next is the hardest part, ground preparation. Choose your method of removal. There are several different ways to remove sod or cool season grasses:
 - a. *Manually remove it* by using a pointed shovel to dig it out. You can save some of the soil by pounding the clumps of sod onto the edge of the shovel blade. This is best for small areas.
 - b. *Till the area* with a gas or electric tiller. You should till between 3-4 times over a short period of time. Allow the soil to dry between tilling. Rake out all roots to totally remove the grass. This was the method I used, mainly because it was more suitable for medium sized areas.
 - c. *Rent a sod cutter*. A sod cutter does what its name implies, it cuts off the sod for easy removal. After removing the sod, you should till the area and mix in some compost to add nutrients to the soil. This method may be the easiest for large areas, but also may cost more because you have to rent a sod cutter.



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d. *Smother the grass.* This method kills the grass by covering it for a long period of time. There are two ways to smother grass. The preferable method is to lay cardboard/newspaper(6-8 sheets) (*black ink only*) over the area. Then cover this material with grass clippings, leaf mulch, or compost. Start this project in summer and wet the newspaper as you're putting it down. This is considered to be the easiest way to remove sod, but it takes the longest amount of time. The soil should be ready by the following spring for seeding.

5. Amend the soil with organic compost. Compost adds essential nutrients to the soil that may have been lost during the sod removal process.
6. Disperse the seeds. I usually disperse the seeds by hand. Make sure they get evenly distributed to cover the entire site. Follow the seed planting direction on the packaging for the best results.
7. Water the area regularly until the plants put on their second set of leaves. Then water once a week until established.
8. Enjoy and watch the wildlife that is attracted to your wildflower garden! During the summer you will get plenty of butterflies and in fall and winter you will get sparrows and goldfinches that will come and eat the seeds.

BENEFICIAL HERBACEOUS PLANTS FOR HUMMINGBIRDS, BUTTERFLIES, AND BEES:

Aster (*Aster spp.*)
Azalea (*Rhododendron spp.*)
Bee Balm (*Monarda spp.*)
Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
Columbine (*Aquilegia spp.*)
Coneflower (*Echinacea spp.*)
Phlox (*Phlox spp.*)
Lupine (*Lupinus spp.*)
Salvia (*Salvia spp.*)
Zinnia (*Zinnia spp.*)

Tip – Don't worry about any weeds that come up in the garden until the second year. It could be a perennial that will not bloom until the second year.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[American Meadows](#)
[Native Plant Society of New Jersey](#)
[Seeds Of Change](#)

ABOUT THE HABITAT RESTORATION PROGRAM

Since 2007 the Conserve Wildlife Foundation (CWF) has been actively restoring habitat for rare wildlife in New Jersey. Since the beginning of the program over 29 acres of wildlife habitat have been restored. CWF encourages the citizens of New Jersey to help create and protect wildlife habitat in their own backyard. We also seek to engage the public in our work by recruiting volunteers to assist with restoration projects.

This fact sheet is part of the Habitat Restoration program created by Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey (CWF). CWF is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting New Jersey's endangered and threatened wildlife and the habitats they depend on for survival. We accomplish this through research and conservation projects and education and outreach programs that advance the protection of New Jersey's rarest wildlife residents.

For more information, visit www.conservewildlifenj.org


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