your dining table without the delectable fruits of apples, blueberries, cherries and peaches or the versatile pumpkin or zucchini. Flowering plants and their associated pollinators are responsible for the vast majority of our food: an estimated one out of every four mouthfuls of food and beverage. Pollinators are also crucial, directly or indirectly, for production of dyes, medicines and some fibers.

Pollinators sustain plant communities by pollinating native plants that provide food, nesting and shelter for wildlife. Bees may be the first pollinators we think of; however, pollinators include butterflies, moths, beetles, hummingbirds, flies and wasps. In North America 99% of pollinators are insects and of those, most are bees.

For more pollinator-friendly garden designs go to: http://web.extension.illinois.edu/cfiv/pollinators/

For further information on bee-friendly gardens and constructing bee nests, check out the fact sheets available from the Xerces Society at www.xerces.org

If you like photography and want to become involved in citizen scientist bee research, become a BeeSpotter at http://beespotter.mste.illinois.edu/

Illustrations by Ann McDowell
Unfortunately pollinators are in perilous decline for a myriad of reasons including loss of native areas. We gardeners can be a positive influence on pollinator populations and diversity by planting pollinator-friendly gardens.

A pollinator-friendly garden is also a people-friendly garden as we enjoy many of the same plants. We just need to add a few elements to provide pollinators with food, water, shelter and a nice place to raise the “kids.” Many resources exist to help, and here are a few basics for a pollinator-friendly garden.

- **Food for pollinators** is generally provided by flower pollen and nectar. However, some pollinating insects need specific plants during certain stages of their life cycle, such as monarch caterpillars and milkweed. These are called “host plants” and are a great addition to pollinating gardens.

- **Opt for native plants whenever possible.** Native plants often need less water than non-natives, do well without fertilizer, and attract and support a diverse range of pollinators. Exotic plants, such as butterfly bush, can provide food for butterflies and bees but doesn’t sustain the complete life cycle of pollinators. Some exotic plants have become invasive, threatening the biodiversity of both native plants and pollinators.

- **Plant clumps of similar flowers** and design areas to have a variety of flowers blooming all season.

- **Allow spaces between clumps of flowers** to provide shelter from wind and cold.

- **Avoid using weedcloth barrier and heavy mulch** since some pollinators nest in the ground.

- **Make your pollinator pocket a pesticide-free zone.**

If you are worried about luring something into your garden that can sting, keep in mind that bees are not bullies looking for a fight. A happy bee is like a gardener in a garden center, focused on each flower.

### Let’s Get Buzzy!

1. **The first step is to “Build it and they will come.”** Convert a section of your lawn into a Pollinator Pocket! A suggested planting plan for an approximately 4 foot by 6 foot space is shown below. Designs were developed for a variety of sun, shade and moisture conditions (see http://web.extension.illinois.edu/cfiv/pollinators/). Within this brochure is a list of pollinator plants of which most are available at local or native plant nurseries.

2. **Leave dead stems over the winter to provide shelter and nesting areas.** Consider adding nesting habitats. Native bees make nests in a variety of places such as pieces of wood, cavities or in open ground. Many bees will defend their nests so developing a nesting site in an out-of-the-way place will make everyone happier including the bees.

3. **Ready to go a bit farther with your lawn?** Set mower blades higher and let clover, dandelions and violets grow and flower.

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**Native Plants**

- **Golden Alexanders**
  - Zizia aurea

- **Prairie Blazing Star**
  - Liatris pycnostachya

- **Prairie Milkweed**
  - Asclepias sullivantii

- **Prairie Milkweed**
  - Liatris pycnostachya

- **New England Aster**
  - Aster novaeangliae

- **Downy Wood Mint**
  - Blephilia ciliata

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- **Hairy Wild Petunia**
  - Ruellia humilis

- **Nodding Onion**
  - Allium cernuum

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- **Nodding Onion**
  - Allium cernuum

- **Culver’s Root**
  - Veronicastrum virginicum

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**No yard? No problem!**Plant containers with annual pollinator favorites, then sit back and enjoy the show!