

## **“Plant a Pollinator Friendly Garden” Contest**

Take steps to add pollinator-friendly plants into both your home and civic gardens and win cash for your GCFM club. In this contest, any pollinator friendly garden employing native plants you create, or that you are already growing, on your property or as a part of your club’s civic beautification work gets you that much closer to the prize. You add to or create a garden using the native pollinator plants recommended on the several websites listed below.

The number of native pollinators have been decreasing drastically as more of the plants we grow are not food sources for them and as too many pesticides and herbicides are used. Many non-native plants do not provide the pollen or nectar needed by native bees, butterflies, moths and others. Without food for their adult and (in the case of butterflies and moths larval stages), they die out. Without the pollinators, many of our plants cannot produce the seeds or fruit that we depend on to feed ourselves. Without pollinators we lose one-third of the food we eat every day. If there is no milkweed, monarch butterflies have nothing that provides the nutrition they need to go from the larval stage to the butterfly stage. In other words, no Monarch butterflies. Repeat that with many other species and our gardens lose the life and magic provided by these hard working and often beautiful visitors to our gardens.

We want to inspire you to change all that. A generous sponsor has offered a \$100 prize to each small, medium and large garden club that grows the largest number of gardens with predominately pollinator friendly plants as a percentage of the membership. For example. If your garden club has 50 members and 15 of them have pollinator friendly gardens plus the club maintains 3 civic sites with pollinator friendly gardens, it has 18 gardens or 36% based on the number of members.

But what is a pollinator garden and how do I know if my plants, already in the ground, are pollinator friendly? First check the websites below. You will quickly find that most native plants, those that evolved with the bees and butterflies, are pollinator friendly. Beyond that, look at websites that are helping gardeners find pollinator friendly plants. (Avoid commercial sites selling plants, they may have ‘split’ agendas.)

Go to the New England Wildflower Society ([NewEnglandWild.org/grow/](http://NewEnglandWild.org/grow/)), the Xerces Society ([xerces.org](http://xerces.org)) or, my absolute favorite, the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service online publication called Pollinator Friendly Plants for the North Eastern United States. Type into your browser [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/nrcs144p2\\_027028.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs144p2_027028.pdf). This site has a photo of the plant and alongside it, a listing of pollinator value, it’s preferred growing site, amount of sun, when it blooms and so much more. The government made it hard to get to but a wonderful resource once you do.

In June of 2017, your garden club could be the recipient of a check for helping the environment while you beautify your property and your neighborhood.