



**Pollinators
& Prairies**

Presented by

**Our Texas
Our Future**


Guide to Planting a Pollinator-Friendly Native Garden



Thanks to NPSOT for their guidance



Step 1

Choose your site



Timeline

Plan and prepare your garden in the summer. For best success, plant in the fall or early spring to avoid extreme heat.



Location

Find an area in your yard to add native plants. It can be to an existing landscape bed or you can create a new bed by removing turf grass. Use a hose to outline your area and get an idea of how much space it will take.



Light

Determine the sunlight conditions of the site so that you can select the native plants that will work best in your site.

- **Full sun = 6 or more hours of direct sunlight a day**
- **Part sun = 4-6 hours of direct sunlight a day**
- **Shade = less than 4 hours of direct sunlight a day**



Add soil

Often imported soil has been added on top of the natural soil types found in the ecoregion. You can find your area's natural soil type on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's ecoregions in Texas webpage. if you want to prepare your site with the naturally occurring soil for your ecoregion. Otherwise, mix in a layer of compost to the soil that you have.



Size

Measure the size of the area so you know roughly how much space you have to work with. This will inform the number and type of native plants you can use.



Garden border

Create a clear border using mulch, stones, or edging to show intentionality and separate your garden from the rest of your lawn and give it a more well-maintained appearance.

Step 2

Prepare the site

Remove unwanted plants and turf grass from the bed.

- Dig up any unwanted plants.
- Kill existing non-native grass and/or weeds by either:
 - Cardboard and mulch: Cover the garden bed area with flattened cardboard boxes. Overlap them so there are no gaps in between. Cover with 3 inches of shredded wood mulch and water deeply to hold down the mulch. This will kill the existing vegetation. When you are ready to plant, carefully cut a hole through the cardboard with a garden knife, or
 - Cover with thick plastic sheeting to use sunlight to kill grass. Plastic must be secured to ground tightly with landscape staples, bricks, etc. so that there are no openings, and kept in place for a couple months to kill existing vegetation, or
 - Create your own organic herbicide by mixing orange oil, 20% vinegar, and dish soap. You will likely need to apply the herbicide many times.
- Enhance the existing soil by incorporating a layer of compost, if desired.
- Contrary to popular belief, it is not recommended to use landscape fabric as a weed barrier since it does nothing to prevent undesirable plant growth and can sometimes cause problems with drainage and roots.



Step 3

Select Your Plants

★ **Choose native species**

Select plants that are native to your local ecoregion (refer to NPSOT database and ecoregion maps). These plants are adapted to local soils, rainfall and temperatures.

★ **Choose plants that meet the sunlight conditions of your bed.**

Group plants together that have similar sunlight and water needs.

★ **Understand the mature size and growth habit of plants.**

Most native plants require three years to reach their mature size. Space your plants in the garden bed based on mature size, not the size they are in the pot.

★ **To maximize pollinator benefits**

aim for a variety of bloom periods throughout the year.

★ **Incorporate native evergreen shrubs and ornamental grasses**

to provide winter interest while other native plants are dormant.



Step 4

Plant Your Native Garden



Dig a hole wider than the size of your pot at about the same depth.



If the roots are wrapping around the inside of the pot or are compacted, loosen and spread them out.



Place the plant in the ground, fill the hole with soil and gently press into place.



Water plants deeply immediately after planting.



Consider placing a layer of mulch (1-2") on top of the soil to retain moisture and reduce evaporation.

Step 5

Watering Your Native Plant Garden

★ First Year

Water new plants deeply once or twice a week (unless there has been a heavy rain that week).

★ After Establishment

Gradually reduce watering frequency. Many native plants can thrive with natural rainfall. If there is an extended drought period, supplement as needed with deep watering to keep soil from drying out.



Step 6

Maintaining your Native Plant Garden

Many native perennials go dormant in the winter.

They may look dead but they are not! They will be back in full bloom next year.

Cut back dead plant matter in late February or early March.

to allow for new growth in the spring; prune woody shrubs in winter during dormancy.

Be a wildlife gardener. Leave the leaves that have dropped from trees since insects often overwinter in leaf litter and do not remove dried seed heads since they provide food for birds and other animals.

Step 7

Observe and Document



Enjoy Your Native Plant Garden Bed

Watch as pollinators find food and shelter in your garden.



Record observations

Use the iNaturalist app to track pollinators and other wildlife and plant species.



Share online

Use social media to share your gardening success and encourage others to plant native.