

Green Gardening With Ann Lovejoy

Gardening For Bees, Bugs and Butterflies

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[Print PDF](#) **A Home Place For Beneficials**

An invitation for you to visit with Northwest garden writer Ann Lovejoy in her garden and kitchen



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It's not good news that in recent years, local gardeners and those around the globe have noticed a radical drop in pollinators. While honeybees get most of the media attention, thousands of species of native bees are also dwindling. Critter census numbers show that many important pollinators are struggling, from bees to bats, birds and butterflies. Those of us who grow food will find our efforts better rewarded if we also plant for those natural allies. Gardens that attract and host beneficial insects of many kinds thrive by becoming a haven for those tiny helpers. Crop production will improve as pollination rates climb, and many of those same beneficial bugs and creatures also eat troublesome garden pests, eliminating any need for toxic pesticides.

To forward this worthy agenda, many folks designate an area near orchards and vegetable beds to become home ground for beneficials. Organic growers call such areas "bug banks," since they become storehouses of invaluable insect garden allies. In its simplest form, a slim strip of bug bank might line or abut each row in a veggie patch, holding perennial herbs such as oregano, thyme, sage and rosemary as well as annual flowers like feverfew and sweet alyssum. The greater the variety of plants on offer, the greater the assortment and quantity of insect helpers that will make themselves at home.

Banking On Northwest Natives

Not surprisingly, native pollinators often prefer native plants, though some are willing to experiment with garden beauties. Early bloomers will lure in numerous insects,

including Mason bees, small but mighty, and more efficient pollinators than European honeybees. To get the full benefit of local pollinators, stock your bug bank with Indian plum (*Oemleria*), flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*), and various species of Oregon grape (*Mahonia*). Native violets, foamflower (*Tiarella*), Mother of thousands (*Tolmia*), and fringe cup (*Tellima*) are also good candidates.

So are all sorts of “weeds,” which are so often more appreciated by insects and other critters than by control-oriented gardeners. The bugbank that supports a few thistles will also support goldfinches, and those dockweeds, buttercups, and dandelions are always in hot demand among the non-human garden users. Most garden herbs are equally popular and often have a haze of humming insects over them in midsummer, including tiny hoverflies and even moths by night.

Making A List, Planting It Twice

Many years ago I attended an exciting workshop on beneficial insects at Interbay P-Patch. The presenter, Sean Phalen, was then the Site Coordinator at Seattle’s Judkins P-Patch, and he had carefully documented the P-Patch’s most popular plants for pollinators through the year. Sean arranged his list of nectar-producing flowers by blooming season to help gardeners make appropriate and attractive planting choices.

Sean’s Plants For Attracting Beneficial Insects Key

P= perennial; B=biennial; no notation=annual; I=intermittent through the year; F=through to frost; **=super nectar producer

ULTRA EARLY (through winter)

Autumn croci (**; P; pulchellus, albus, zonatus...)
Hardy cyclamen (**; P; neapolitanum, hederifolium, coum...) Helebores (P)
Mahonia (**; P, I)
Snowdrops (**; P)
Aconite (**; P)
Borage (I, **)
Calendula (I, **)
Earliest narcissi (**P)

EARLY

Snow crocus species (**; P)
Early daffodils and narcissi (**; P) Species tulips (**; P; tarda, hageri...) Glory-of-the-snow (**; P; Chionodoxa) Iris reticulata (**; P)
Rosemary (P, **)
Primrose (P; early)
Bolting cruciferae (**)

MID-SPRING

Single daffodils (P) Species primrose (P) Scillas (**; P) Violets (P; **)

Violas (P, I, **)

Anemones (**; P; Spring-St. Brigid's mix, monarch de caen...) Alyssum (annual-I; and perennial; **)

HIGH SPRING

Late Single Daffodils (**;P)

Tulips-single (P)

Dutch iris

Aquilegia (P;columbine)

Armeria maritima (P; **; native-sea pinks) Candytufts (annual-F, &P, **)

Dianthus (sweet Williams, some F; and per.pinks) Creeping phlox (P; **;incl. native P. subulata) Campanulas (P)

Centaurea (**; A-I; &P)

Digitalis (**: B; foxglove)

English daisy (B; **;bellis)

Godetia (F; **;s summer's herald-native)

Clarkia (F; **; native-mountain garland)

Linaria (F; **o

Lupines (A&P)

Lunaria (B; money plant)

Pyrethrum (P; painted daisy)

Saponarias (P; soapwort)

Stocks (F, **)

Cal. Bluebells (**, Phacelia campanularia) Nemophila (**)

Tidy tips (**)

Myosotis (B; **; forget-me-nots)

Poppies-single (all, A &P, **, California poppies-I) Sweet peas (**ù)

EARLY SUMMER

Anagalis (P; blue pimpernel)

Bidens (P; golden goddess)

Achilleas (P; I; F; **; incl. native A. millefolium) Nasturtiums (F, **)

Chives (**; P; both garlic and regular)

Parsley (**: B)

Cilantro (**)

Erigeron

Dill (**)

Mints (**)

Dymorphotheca (F; African daisy)

Dahlberg Daisy (F)

Shasta Daisy-single (some F)

Geranium (some F; NOT Pelargonium)
Gilia (**; birds eyes)
Purple tansy (**; Phacelia tanacetifolia)
Silene (**; P; catchfly)
Hesperus matronalis (P; **; sweet rocket) Linums (**; A & P)
Lobelias (A- F; &P)
Monarda (**; P)
Nepetas (**; P;F; catnip, catmint...)
Potentillas (P, F)
Spireas (P)
Viscaria (**; rose angel)
Thyme (**; P)

HIGH SUMMER

Agastaches (**; P; licorice mint...) Asclepias (**; b-fly weed) Asters-single (A&P; F; **)
brachymone (F; swan river daisy) Basils (**)

Catananche (P; cupid's dart)
Centranthus (P; F; jupiter's beard)
Cleome (F; spider flowerù)
Annual chrysanthemum (F)
Convolvulus (F)
coreopsis (F; **)
Cosmos (F; ; A&P)
Dianthus (F; A &P; carnations, ann. pinks... singles) Eupatorium (**; joe pye weed)
Gaillardia (F; **; A & P)
Gazania (transvaal daisy)
Hollyhocks-singles (**; P, B & A; singles)
Marigolds (**; F; singles-“gem” series T. signata) Summer savory
Zinnias (**; F; singles; Africans “profusion”series) Salvias and sages (some F; **; A & P)
Oreganos (**; P)
Malvas (P)
Mimulus
Penstemons (P; some F; incl. natives)
Gauras (P; F; **)
Phlox (F; A & P)
Physostegia (F; P; obedient plant)
Portulaca (F)
Sunflowers-singles (**; F; A & P)
Tahoka daisy (**; F)
Torenia (F; wishbone flower)
Trachymene (F; **;blue lace flower)
Verbenas (F; **; A&P)
Verbascums (**; P)

Veronias (P; **; F; speedwell)
Lilies (**; P)
Daylilies-singles (**,P;some F)

LATE SUMMER

Asters-singles (F: A&P: late)
Amaranthus (F)
Echinaceas (**; P; F; coneflowers)
Calliopsis(**; F)
Rudbeckias-singles (**; F; P; black-eyed susans) Ratibida (**; F; P; prairie coneflower)
Ornamental grasses (P- nesting material) Oenothera (**; P; F; evening primroses)

Sedums (**; F; P; incl. natives) Early, single mums (F; P)
Tithonia (**; F; Mexican sunflower) Solidagos (**; F; goldenrods)

FALL

colchicums (**; P)
late single mums (F; P)
late sedums (**:F; P)
fall anemones(**; F; P)
saffron crocus (**;P; all autumn crocus)....

Peace and plenty for pollinators!