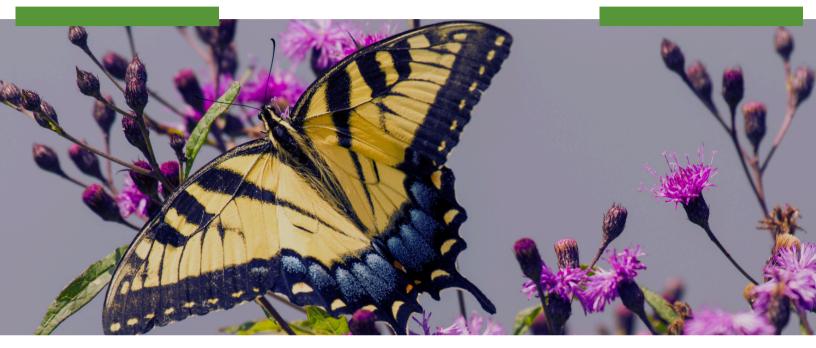
Volume 4



July 2024

# **CONSERVATION@HOME**

shaping private and community landscapes in a conservation-minded way <u>extension.illinois.edu/fmpt/conservationhome</u>



# SUMMER

Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, Horticulture Educator Tara Heath, Horticulture Program Coordinator Christine Belless, Ag & Natural Resources Coordinator Karen Wiegelt, Special Projects Program Coordinator

Summer is here and the growing season is in full swing. My butterfly garden is full of summer bloomers and pollinator activity. During these long, warm summer days pollinators are busy collecting resources to complete their life cycles. Plan to have blooms from spring to fall to give pollinators necessary nectar and pollen resources. To support many different kinds of pollinators, aim to have three different types flowers blooming during each season. Different flower color

and shape attracts a variety of pollinators.

For example, butterflies like flowers that have a place to land while moths can hover to collect nectar. Bees are attracted to white, yellow or blue flowers while butterflies look for red or purple flowers.

Summer is also a time when birds are stopping here to find nests, raise young and fuel up for fall migration. Having plants that produce seeds, fruit or support insects are important to give birds the food resources they require.

Water is a vital resource for all living things. Providing a water source in your space is another simple step you can do to help support wildlife. It can be as simple as a shallow dish that gets cleaned and refilled every day.

Summer in a Conservation@Home yard is full of life. Some of these simple tips can help keep the habitat you have created a place for all forms of life.



# PROVIDE RESOURCES TO POLLINATORS IN ANY SPACE WITH CONTAINER GARDENS

#### **ILRIVER HORT BLOG**

Container gardens are one solution for growing pollen and nectar resources that pollinators need in small spaces. Containers offer many options, from simple, single-plant systems to multi-level and extended blooming displays.

### READ MORE

### SUPPORTING POLLINATORS IN SMALL SPACES

Supporting pollinators has become increasingly important as concerns over pollinator population decline are more evident. The good news is that even small spaces can provide resources for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators.

# BRING BIRDS CLOSE TO HOME BY GARDENING FOR FEATHERED FRIENDS

#### **ILLINOIS EXTENSION GARDENER'S CORNER SUMMER 2024**

People plant gardens for food, flowers, and function, but planting for the birds can be beautiful and beneficial to the environment. What if instead of storebought bird seed in a feeder, gardens could include a buffet of different foods for birds while also being a beautiful addition to any landscaping?



### PLANTS PROVIDE FOOD RESOURCES FOR BIRDS

Birds have a varied diet that, depending on the species, could include seeds, fruit, bugs, worms, and even nectar. Caterpillars are a critical part of many baby bird diets, so planting food for caterpillars through host plants and other insects can support future generations.

# NATIVE PLANT PROFILE WILD BERGAMOT

#### UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION: ILLINOIS POLLINATORS

#### Monarda fistulosa

A very popular addition to the native plant garden, Wild Bergamot will easily spread to fill a space. A favorite of bumblebees.

Wild Bergamot is an herbaceous perennial that thrives in zone 3 to 9. This native perennial can grow to be between 2 to 4 feet tall and spreads about 2 to 3 feet.

Plant in a space with full sun for the best flowering. A plant in the mint family, this plant will spread aggressively. Ensure airflow and avoid watering the leaves to minimize powdery mildew.

While it prefers moist, well-drained soil, Wild Bergamot can also tolerate clay soils. Lavender flowers bloom in June, July and August. Leaves can turn red in the fall. Start from seed or plant plugs. Wild Bergamot can spread to form colonies.

This is a sturdy perennial that works well in a butterfly garden, pollinator garden, native garden, rain garden, or naturalized area with moist, well-draining soil and plenty of sunlight.

For more information on Wild Bergamot check out these articles:

- <u>Bee Balm for the Home Landscape</u> by Ryan Pankau
- Illinois Wildflowers: Wild Bergamot





# NOW THAT YOUR YARD IS CERTIFIED

An attractive and functional yard that conserves water and provides habitat for birds, butterflies and other beneficial wildlife deserves some recognition! Your certified yard is an environmentally-friendly landscape through the Conservation@Home program and you have a sign to post proudly. When your neighbors see your sign and get curious, they will want to know how they can get a sign like that. Before you know it, yard by yard, you've brought more nature to your neighborhood.

We would love to see the Conservation@Home sign in your yard. Place your sign in a visible place on a t-post or sturdy wooden stake then get a picture. If you need assistance with getting your sign posted, please let us know. Once you have your picture, we would love it if you would send it our way (email is usually the best and easiest way).

# **2024 CONSERVATION@HOME MEMBERS**









## CONSERVATION@HOME MEMBER SPOTLIGHT MIKE MCGRAW & PAT ENGLAND

#### TAZEWELL COUNTY

Twenty-nine years ago, we hoped to enjoy our outdoor space. Today, our yard brings us great joy. We love to see goldfinches feasting on coneflower seeds in the winter, to watch the many bumble bees circling the Culver's root, to catch a glimpse of a hummingbird sipping nectar from royal catchfly.

#### Mike McGraw

In September, 2023, my wife and I were honored to have our yard certified as ecofriendly by the Conservation@Home program. It has been a 29-year journey from "nothing" to a small haven for birds, insects and native plants.

When we moved into our Washington, Illinois home in 1995, it was new construction. The yard was bare – no grass, not a single bit of green anywhere.My wife and I both loved flowers and wanted a well-landscaped yard, so we immediately set about planting a lawn, trees, shrubs, and flower beds. However, at that time we were not yet aware of the benefits of native landscaping. We planted mostly standard garden fare: grass, lilacs, roses, peonies, and daylilies,

Almost immediately, I built a large doublebin compost box, and we added feeders and a water source to attract birds. At some point, we realized our somewhat typical suburban yard required a lot of work: watering, weeding, fertilizing, and mowing. The benefits of less grass and native prairie plants began to appeal to us.

At first, we started with just a few natives. We were intrigued by Switchgrass, Sideoats Grama, Ironweed, Common Milkweed and the majestic Compass Plant.



We felt a connection to Illinois' prairie past. Once we noticed how many bees, wasps and butterflies were attracted to our yard, we knew natives were the way to go. Slowly, little by little, we replaced many of our exotic plantings with indigenous plants. New beds were planted mostly with natives as well.

Today, we still have some grassy lawn, as well as boxwoods, irises, lilacs, peonies and hostas. They fit in nicely with our mostly semi-wild landscape. About half of our yard is devoted to beds of various kinds, including several sunny "prairie" beds; a garden in the shade of two Hawthorn trees; and the newest addition, a rain garden. The prairie beds are packed with more than 40 species of mostly-native plants and grasses, from the commonplace, such as Purple Coneflower and Bee Balm, to the uncommon: Round-headed Bush Clover and Eastern Agave. The shade garden boasts Zigzag Goldenrod, Wild Geranium, Wild Ginger, Large-flowered Bellwort, and even Mayapple and a Jack-in-the-pulpit. Native plants, including Button Bush, Swamp Mallow and Cardinal Flower, also populate the rain garden.

continue on next page.....

#### CONSERVATION@HOME MEMBER SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED.....



Once we had a landscape with mostly native plants, other conservation practices just made good sense. Pesticides are no longer necessary, as most native plants are rarely bothered by pests. And using pesticides might harm the bees and butterflies that we are trying to attract. Little watering is necessary as most Illinois natives are little bothered by periods of drought. And we still have a compost box. We added bee houses to provide a home for the solitary bees. To aid all the "good" insects, we don't cut back our plants in the fall, creating an overwintering haven for them.

We like the birds that are attracted to our yard. Eleven trees and a few shrubs provide food and shelter, feeders are kept filled all winter long, and a bird bath provides water.

Twenty-nine years ago, we hoped to enjoy our outdoor space. Today, our yard brings us great joy. We love to see Goldfinches feasting on Coneflower seeds in the winter, to watch the many Bumble Bees circling the Culver's Root, to catch a glimpse of a hummingbird sipping nectar from Royal Catchfly. Brilliant Northern Cardinals splash in the bird bath, and perfectly peaceful wasps feed on Rattlesnake Master. It was a long journey and much work from nothing to Conservation@Home, but it was well worth it.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**



#### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- July 16, 2024, 5:30 pm at the <u>Fulton County Farm Bureau Building</u>, 15411 IL-100, Lewistown: Dr. Mike Wiant will share information about "Native American Use of Plants." Social time begins at 5:30, program starts at 6 pm.
- September 17, 2024, 5:30 pm: Log Room, <u>Wildlife Prairie Park</u>, 3826 N Taylor Rd, Hanna City Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle will share information about Invasive Species and Wild Spotter. Social time begins at 5:30 pm, program starts at 6 pm.
- December 10, 2024, 5:30 pm: <u>Wallace Park</u> 250 S Ave D, Canton. End of the Year Gathering. A time to enjoy each other's company and celebrate all of the accomplishments and experiences of 2024.



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