

Illinois Pollinator Plants for the Garden



I ILLINOIS

Extension

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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***Aquilegia canadensis* (Wild columbine)**

Characteristics: only native species in Illinois; 1-3' tall; blooms late spring to early summer with red and yellow blossoms that have pronounced nectar spurs.

Garden conditions: prefers shade to partial shade; woodland species; loses appearance after flowering.

Pollinator Associations: Butterflies, moths, bumblebees and the ruby-throated hummingbird visit the flowers for nectar; bumblebees may also collect pollen for their larvae. *Photo by John Hilty.*

***Oenothera pilosoela* (Prairie sundrops)**

Characteristics: prairie flowers blooms in late spring and early summer; has large yellow petals with show floral parts on fuzzy stems.

Garden Conditions: full sun; moist conditions; likes organic rich soils; appearance diminishes after flowering and can have aggressive qualities.

Pollinator Associations: pollinated primarily by long-tongued bees (Little Carpenter bees and large Leaf-Cutting bees), butterflies, skippers and moths.

Photo by John Hilty.

***Baptisia* spp. (Wild indigo)**

Characteristics: around 20 native species: blooms from March to June; Produce flower spikes of blue and white; forms green pods that turn black and split open.

Garden Conditions: full sun; drought tolerant; long lived; Slow to establish and unable to compete against aggressive plants

Pollinator Associations: Blue wild indigo attracts queen bumblebees and white attracts worker bumblebees for nectar. *Photo by Kelly Allsup.*

***Agastache foeniculum* (Anise hyssop)**

Characteristics: produces blue-violet spike flowers mid to late summer

Garden Conditions: full sun to partial Sun; long floral display; adaptable.

Pollinator Associations: flowers are cross-pollinated primarily by honeybees, bumblebees, digger bee, leaf-cutting bees, *Halictid* bees (sweat bees) and *Hylaeus* spp. (Masked bees). Other occasional floral visitors are Syrphid flies, bee flies, and various butterflies, skippers, and moths. *Photo by Kelly Allsup.*

***Asclepias tuberosa* (Butterfly weed)**

Characteristics: blooms early to mid summer and again in late summer to early fall; large umbel shaped flowers with orange petals; turns to large green pods that darken as they mature; stems have milky sap

Garden Conditions: Full sun; drought tolerant; taproot makes it difficult to transplant; susceptible to frost heaving and slow to establish

Pollinator Associations: The flower nectar attracts honeybees, digger bees, leaf-cutting bees, *Halictid* bees (Green Metallic bees), *Ammophila* spp. (thread-waisted wasps) and other *Sphecid* wasps, and butterflies, including Fritillaries, Swallowtails and the Monarch and the ruby-throated hummingbird.

Photo by Kelly Allsup.

***Echinacea purpurea* (Purple coneflower)**

Characteristics: *E. pallida* (Pale coneflower) blooms earlier than *purpurea*. Purple coneflower blooms June to August; producing daisy-like flowers that range in color from purple and pinks, seed heads turn dark and remain on the plant and will attract birds

Garden Conditions: full sun to partial sun; prefers well-drained soil, drought tolerant once established.

Pollinator Associations: Honeybees, bumblebees, digger bees and leaf-cutting bees. Butterfly visitors include Monarchs, Fritillaries, Painted Ladies, Swallowtails, Sulfurs, and Whites. *Photo by Phil Nixon.*

***Liatris pycnostachya* (Prairie blazingstar)**

Characteristics: blooms mid to late summer; large erect pink to purple spikes; achenes that look like brown tufts disperse in the wind

Garden Conditions: full sun; young plants do not tolerate drought.

Pollinator Associations: *Halictine* bees, bee flies, and day-flying moths. long-tongued bees such visitors as honeybees, bumblebees, Little carpenter bees, miner bees, and large leaf-cutting bees. Butterfly visitors include Monarchs, swallowtails, painted Ladies, sulfurs and whites. *Photo by John Hilty.*

***Eupatorium perfoliatum* (Bonset)**

Characteristics: 2-4' plant blooms late summer to early fall; large spreading flower head with clusters of white disk florets; flowers turn into achenes and dispersed by wind.

Garden Characteristics: Full sun to part sun; moist conditions; can withstand some flooding

Pollinator Associations: The nectar or pollen of the flowers attracts bees, flies, wasps, butterflies, and beetles. *Photo by John Hilty.*

***Helianthus mollis* (Downy sunflower)**

Characteristics: 2-4' tall; blooms in Late summer to early fall with Composite flower bright yellow on fuzzy gray foliage. Garden Conditions: full sun; dry conditions; forms dense colonies

Growing conditions: allelopathic so may not allow other plants to grow.

Pollinator Associations: Primarily bees visit the flowers for nectar or pollen, including bumblebees, Miner bees, large Leaf-Cutting bees, Cuckoo bees, Green Metallic bees, and other *Halictid* bees. Bee flies and butterflies. *Photo by John Hilty.*

***Lobelia cardinalis* (Cardinal flower)**

Characteristics: grows 2-4'; blooms late summer to early fall with showy red spike like racemes that procures small seeds dispersed by wind.

Garden Conditions: light shade to full sun; moist conditions; difficult to transplant because of taproot and can be short-lived.

Pollinator Associations: The nectar of the flowers attracts the ruby throated Hummingbird and various Swallowtail butterflies. Sometimes the larger bumblebees will steal nectar through slits in the tubular corolla. *Photo by Doug Tallamy.*