Insect Invitation: Attracting Pollinators and Other Beneficial Insects to Your Garden!

A bed of low-maintenance wildflowers is a wonderful addition to a vegetable garden or a vibrant, beautiful learning garden all on its own! These flowers attract bees, ladybugs, and other beneficial insects, providing food and shelter for the “good guys” in the garden! Including annual and perennial species native and/or naturalized to the northeast United States, these mixes are adapted to the New York climate and require less maintenance than many edible crops. Wildflower plantings typically need no extra fertilizer and little or no supplemental watering after germination – making them a great choice for busy school gardeners and schools without summer programming. Here are some helpful tips to create a wildflower bed.

**Plan** your plantings: wildflower mixes can either be planted in the late Spring, after the last frost, or in the Fall. If planted in the Fall, seeds will not germinate until the following Spring.

**Prepare** your garden by cultivating the soil, adding some compost, and raking the surface flat.

**Scatter** seeds evenly over the surface. (Digging holes for seeds is unnecessary: these seeds should be no deeper than 1/8\(^{\text{th}}\) of an inch below the soil surface.) Lightly cover with a layer of soil or compost.

**Water immediately!** Watering seeds jump starts germination. Make sure to water lightly using a watering can, yogurt cup with holes on the bottom, or shower-type spray from a hose nozzle. DO NOT water with a bucket or hose without a nozzle: the soil will become compacted and the seeds can wash away. Water seedlings frequently enough that the surface is moist until the seeds have sprouted. As the plants get bigger, they’ll need less water.

**Bee Feed Mix**
This mix is a blend of nectar and pollen flowers for honey bees, native bees, bumble bees, and other pollinators. The mix includes low-maintenance perennials and reseeding annual wildflowers.
Chinese Forget-Me-Not
Biennials develop leaves, stems, and roots in the first year and flower in the second year.

Siberian Wallflower
This perennial blooms early, in late Spring.

California Poppy
Grown as an annual in cooler climates and has medicinal properties.

Purple Coneflower
Showy perennial often known by its genus name, Echinacea, and for its medicinal properties.

China Aster
Late-blooming annual produces its flowers at the end of summer.

Corn Poppy
Popular annual wildflower with medicinal properties.

Lance-leaved Coreopsis
This perennial attracts butterflies and native bees.

Blue Flax
Perennial with fibrous stems that were once used in Europe to make linen and rope.

Baby Blue Eyes
Low-growing annual with bright blue and white flowers.

Globe Gilia
Annual likely to self-seed.

Indian Blanket
Heat- and drought-tolerant annual with medicinal properties that is likely to self-seed.

Tidy Tips
Daisy-like annual grows quickly and blooms heavily. Prefers dry conditions.

White Rockcress
Low-growing, fragrant perennial.

Plains Coreopsis
Annual that reseeds profusely. Excellent for cut flowers.

Sweet Alyssum
Creeping and low-growing annual with a sweet smell.

Lavender Hyssop
The bright purple flowers of this perennial attract butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. Crushed leaves smell like mint or licorice.

Fleabane Daisy
Perennial native to North America.

New England Aster
Showy, late blooming perennial attracts butterflies and other pollinators.

Bergamot
A member of the mint family, this perennial attracts bees and butterflies. Its leaves may be used in teas.
Beneficial Insect Attractant Mix

This mix of flowers, herbs, and cover crops attract a wide array of beneficial insects that prey upon garden-harming bugs. This mix contains fourteen varieties of annuals and perennials which provide a pleasing range of heights and colors from Spring to Fall.

**White Yarrow**
Spreading perennial attracts butterflies. Cut plant back after initial flowering to encourage bloom.

**Golden Tuft**
Early blooming perennial attracts syrphid flies, big-eyed bugs, and minute pirate bugs.

**False Queen Anne’s Lace**
Annual likely to self-seed. Attracts parasitic wasps, minute pirate bugs, big-eyed bugs, syrphid flies, ladybugs, lacewings, and others.

**Dill**
An annual culinary herb, dill hosts the larvae of black swallowtail butterflies and also attracts tachinid and syrphid flies, lacewings, parasitic wasps, ladybugs, damsel bugs, and others.

**Cilantro**
An annual culinary herb, cilantro attracts parasitic wasps and hoverflies.

**Sulphur Cosmos**
Annual flower should be deadheaded for continuing bloom. Attracts tachinid and syrphid flies, parasitic wasps, lacewings, minute pirate bugs, spiders, ladybugs, big-eyed bugs, damsel bugs, and others.

**Buckwheat**
Annual flowering cover crop that amends soil and attracts bees, hoverflies, and other beneficial insects.

**Fennel**
An annual culinary herb, fennel attracts lacewings, ladybugs, hoverflies, parasitic wasps, and big-eyed bugs.

**Hairy Vetch**
Perennial cover crop amends soil and attracts minute pirate bugs, lady bugs, and parasitic wasps.

**Sweet Alyssum**
Creeping and low-growing annual with a sweet smell attracts parasitic wasps.

**German Chamomile**
This annual attracts parasitic wasps and hoverflies.

**Mizuna**
A pungent edible Asian green (annual), mizuna, when allowed to bolt and flower, attracts hoverflies, lacewings, and bees.

**Basil**
An annual culinary herb, basil attracts butterflies and bees. Allow to flower.

**Crimson Clover**
Annual flowering cover crop that amends soil and attracts bees, big-eyed bugs, ladybugs, and more.

**Dwarf Sunflower**
These familiar annuals attract bees and parasitic wasps.

**Dwarf cornflower**
This beautiful annual attracts butterflies, bees, lacewings, ladybugs, hoverflies, and parasitic wasps.