



Lawn Care for Pollinators

Did you know that there 40,000,000 acres of lawn in the United States?

And that pollinators see them as food deserts?

Why are lawns pollinator deserts? Lawn studies show...

Frequent mowing of lawns reduces flower density, thus limiting food for pollinators. By decreasing mowing frequency, plants can grow and flower, providing increased foraging opportunities. Urban ecologists Susannah Lerman and Joan Milam at UMass performed an urban-suburban lawn study in Springfield in 2014. They found that mowing no lower than three inches, changing the mowing interval from once a week to every two weeks, and leaving lawns untreated with herbicides provided a diversity of "spontaneous" flowers, such as dandelions and clover, that offer nectar and pollen to bees and other pollinators.

After changing the mowing practices of Springfield homeowners, the study documented 110 native bee species, 72 species of flowering plants, two new state records, and six new county records for bee sightings in the participant lawns. (Lerman & Milam, 2014)

A federal study found that raising mowing height to at least 2.5 inches, mowing only every 2-3 weeks, and minimizing pesticide use can increase flower abundance by 70-300 percent (US Forest Service, 2015) Doing so also supports ground-nesting bees by reducing compaction.

What can you do to increase pollinator habitat in your lawn?

- Develop a three week mowing rotation to ensure flowering plants persist through the growing season.
- Increase areas for flowering plants and dedicate less area to lawn. Mow borders or paths at a minimum three-inch height around or through areas planted with flowers.
- Use lawn alternatives. Native groundcovers, sedges, fescues and low wildflowers can all replace or complement grass. Or establish a meadow.
- Provide a variety of native flowering trees, shrubs and wildflowers that bloom successively throughout the seasons.

Source: Great Barrington Pollinator Plan

Mowing high also establishes a larger root system making the lawn more drought tolerant and possibly more grub tolerant as well as shading the soil surface providing some broadleaf weed and crabgrass control.



Planting for Pollinators!

Let's build biodiversity and beauty in Greenfield