

Won't You Bee My Neighbor – Program Description

Welcome to the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative's *Won't You Bee My Neighbor* program! Established in May of 2024, this neighborhood pollinator program was designed with smaller landscapes in mind.

Our goal is to provide patches of suitable habitat to combat the loss of our native birds and pollinators, especially the Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). Right now, they are listed as “warranted-but-precluded” by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. This means that although protection for Monarchs is warranted in the United States, this species has not been listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act due to other higher priority candidates needing help first.

As of 2023, *Danaus plexippus* has been listed as vulnerable under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. We do not want Monarch butterflies to end up as a high priority candidate for immediate action. Of our native non-migratory pollinators, Ohio has 14 moth species listed as endangered, eight butterfly, two mayfly, and one bee. These are animals that do not travel through the United States but have a special place within our own ecosystems.

By creating ‘pit stops’ for migrating species, we can provide them with enough energy and safe havens to get them from one area to the next. Ohio’s non-migratory species will also greatly benefit. Our motto is, “All you can, where you can!” as small changes can make a big difference. We want you to join in and choose native plants during your next spring planting.

A native species is one that occurs naturally in an ecosystem. Native plants and animals that coevolved together, thrive together, such as Monarchs and milkweed. So, it is within the best interest of these flora and fauna that we do not purposefully displace them. You as a program participant, who has jurisdictional authority of a property, are entrusted to add native plants to your landscape with only a few simple guidelines.

1). Must be at least 50sq ft. Your pollinator area may be divided, and plants may be potted. 2). Must contain three blooming plants per season with a variety of shapes and sizes. These blooms may come from shrubs or flowers. 3). All flowering plants must be native. 4). Must contain at least one species of native milkweed. 5). Pledge to use sustainable practices as highlighted in the application form.

This program was designed to empower property owners to make a noticeable difference in their neighborhood. Anyone landowner may participate including homeowners, businesses, schools, state organizations, churches, and other nonprofit entities, as long as they are in Ohio.

To get started, just follow our guidelines listed in the *Won't You Bee My Neighbor* program application at www.ohiopollinator.org. There you'll find a Q&A, establishment scenarios, plant suggestions, and a soil/mulch calculator.

Once your application is approved you will receive a custom yard sign, program certificate, and be eligible to be listed on our conservation map. Per your request, you do not have to be visible, but the amount of area participating will be added to the ever growing contribution of pollinator supportive land. Signing up alongside 10 or more neighbors will give you special recognition as a *Won't You Bee My Neighborhood*, and you and your friends will be interviewed for our website.

Happy planting!