



LET'S GROW Native



Column and photographs
by Carol A. Heiser

RESOURCES

- ◆ Super Low Maintenance Native Plant Landscaping – a website from Plant NOVA Natives (includes groundcovers): <https://www.plantnovanatives.org/low-maintenance-gardens>
- ◆ How to Landscape with Native Plants at Home - James River Association: <https://thejamesriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Native-Plants.pdf>

In the midst of spring, the sweetest reward for this home gardener is the joy I feel when I look closely at a native flower and see small, fuzzy *Colletes* bees eagerly probing for nectar. *Colletes* are a native species (plasterer bees), and along with other bee groups like *Halictus* (sweat bees), *Ceratina* (small carpenter bees) and *Osmia* (mason bees), they need nectar sources provided by native plants.

Sadly, most of our urban and suburban landscapes are devoid of much else than lawn and non-natives. “To realize the ecological potential of our landscapes, most of us have to increase the abundance and diversity of our plantings,” says Doug Tallamy in his most recent book, *Nature’s Best Hope* (2019 Timber Press). “We need to practice conservation where we live, where we work, and where we farm,” by restoring ecological balance with “keystone plants” that will “create the most productive landscapes possible...for the largest number of... insects.”

Try planting a patch or two of native perennials that will create beautiful color, visual texture, and improved habitat for many insect species. Here are some spring-blooming favorites that can help you bring life back to your landscape:



A layer of groundcover is beginning to fill in with the yellow flowers of green-and-gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*), accented by tall spikes of foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*).



The pea-shaped flowers of blue wild indigo (*Baptisia australis*) invite bumblebees and other nectar-seekers. *Baptisia* is also a host plant for the wild indigo duskywing butterfly.



The long-lasting whitish-blue flowers of woodland phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) pair nicely with the spray-like heads of golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*). *Zizia* is an important native host plant for the caterpillars of black swallowtail butterflies as seen in insert. Plant *Zizia* instead of non-native dill and fennel.



The deep-throated, tubular white flowers of beardtongue (*Penstemon* spp.) are a magnet for hungry bees and attract hummingbirds, too.

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