



# Denton County Master Gardener Association

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

MENU 

## Planting for pollinators

### Plan Your Garden

The first step, of course, is to plan your new garden site keeping in mind the focus is to create a habitat for native birds, insects, and other wildlife.



- **Layout your design on paper.** You may want to use colored markers or pencils to represent the different colors of flowers in your design.
- **Define the light conditions** of the site where you plan to plant. You'll do that by visiting the site at various times of the day about 3 to 4 hours apart and noting the sunlight the area is receiving.
  - Sun: Direct sun all day. Plants labeled as full sun require 6 or more hours of sunlight each day
  - Part Sun: Two to three hours without sun. Plants labeled as part sun require at least 3 hours of sunlight and up to 6 hours of sunlight each day.
  - Part Shade: Four to five hours without sun. Plants labeled as part shade require some relief from the intense heat of the afternoon sun.
  - Full Shade: No direct sunlight, only reflective sunlight.
  - Dense Shade: Dark with no reflective sunlight. Shade-loving plants are best in Full or Dense Shade.
- **What type of soil is on the site?** This link from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides instructions for taking soil samples and sending them in for analysis – <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/webpages/forms.html>. You will receive an analysis and recommendations for amendments your soil may need to grow healthy plants.
- **Understand the surrounding plants.** Is the site under mature trees? If so, what type are they? Is the site bordered by a lawn, if so, what type of turf is growing there? The type of turf can influence what type of edging you may want to use. For example, Bermuda turf has a nasty habit of putting out runners into your landscape beds so a buried type landscape edging and a weed barrier on the soil may be in order.
- **How do you plan to irrigate the site** – i.e., drip irrigation (preferred method), sprinkler system, by hand? It is best to design the landscape for water efficiency: Use native and adaptive plants, the appropriate slope to avoid water run-off, and apply mulch to conserve soil moisture and control weeds.
- **What is the size and location of your site?** Is it located near the home foundation or in the middle of the yard? Is it viewable from the front only or from multiple sides? This will help you understand how many plants you might need, what plant heights are best, and where you may want to locate the plants in the site.
- **Plan in a water source for the wildlife.** It can be simple like a shallow birdbath, pond or pool.
- **Provide nesting sites** such as dead or dying trees/branches or nesting boxes.
- And, the fun part, **choose the plants for your wildscape** :
  - **Stick with Texas native and adaptive plants** that do well in North Texas. These are often drought tolerant, attract native pollinators and wildlife, and require less maintenance. This link from Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center at Dallas lists the top 100 plants for North Texas: <https://cdn-ext.agnet.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/top-100-plants-for-north-texas.pdf>
  - **Choose plants that bloom or fruit at various times of the year** to provide a food source in most seasons. Include evergreen plants to provide cover in winter.

- **Choose host and nectar plants** that will attract the type of butterflies found in your area. This link from Butterflies and Moths of North America lists those found in Denton County: [https://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/checklists?species\\_type=All&tid=47728](https://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/checklists?species_type=All&tid=47728)
- **Consider the mature height** of the plants in your design. Group plants by mature height.
- **Plant nectar and host plants near one another** to attract butterflies and native bees.

## Prepare Your Garden



Fall is a great time to prep your garden site and plant native and adaptive perennials to give them time to get well established in the cooler temperatures.

**Note: Some sources do no recommend sand in our Black Houston Clay**

### Prepare the Soil

- **Remove all spring/summer plants** that have run their course. The plant material should not be composted if it has or had any fungal or bacterial pathogens.
- **Dig out, do not till under, any weeds or grass** that may have grown in the garden.
- Shovel or **turn under the soil** 10" to 12".
- **Replenish the soil** with 2" to 3" of organic material such as fully composted manure and add 1" to 2" coarse sand.
- **Add slow-release fertilizer** at the rate of 2 to 3 pounds per 100 square feet.
- **Work all of these into the soil** 4" to 6" with a garden fork. Tilling the soil is not recommended as it breaks down the soil structure.
- **Deeply water the area** for about 2 hours, then allow to dry for 2 days. Now your garden is ready to plant!

### Establish Irrigation

**Install drip irrigation or adjust the existing automatic irrigation system** for your new garden. This link from Water University, Texas A&M AgriLife Research Extension, has lots of information about water-efficient irrigation: <https://wateruniversity.tamu.edu/irrigation/basics/>

### Maintain Your Garden

Texas Parks and Wildlife article on *Management Recommendations for Native Insect Pollinators in Texas* cautions: “Pesticides are detrimental to a healthy community of native insect pollinators.” And continues, “. . . the use of pesticides in areas managed for native insect pollinators should be avoided. Drift from pesticides applied on lands with alternate uses should also be minimized.”

[https://tpwd.texas.gov > pwdpubs > media > pwd\\_bk\\_w7000\\_1813](https://tpwd.texas.gov > pwdpubs > media > pwd_bk_w7000_1813)

Texas EarthKind® recommends, “Use organic gardening techniques, including compost and organic sources of fertilizer, to supply nutrients to plants. Try spraying insect infestations with a forceful spray of water before resorting to pesticides. Use 2-4 inches of mulch to reduce weeds and the need to water. Recycle leaves and grass clippings by composting or using as mulch.” <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/files/2010/10/wildscapes.pdf>



## Sources and Resources

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Denton County Master Gardener Association, “[Creating a Pollinator-Friendly Garden](#)”*

[Nature in Your Landscape](#), Denton County Master Gardener Association

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, [Texas Wildscapes](#)*

[Enticing North Texas Butterflies](#)

[Basics of Irrigation](#)

[Top 100 Plants for North Texas](#)

*Texas Parks and Wildlife, [Management Recommendations for Native Insect Pollinators in Texas](#)*

*Native Plant Society of Texas, [Native Plant Wildlife Habitat Garden](#)*

[Landscape Integrated Pest Management](#)

*Butterflies and Moths of North America, [Butterfly and Moth Species Found in Denton County](#):*

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