



Creating a Native Pollinator Garden Wildlife

Presented by Betsy Dudash

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What are pollinators?

- Pollinators are any creatures—but mostly insects—that help fertilize the female parts of plants by carrying pollen from male parts or plants.
- Most people know that bees are pollinators, but so are moths and butterflies.
- Ants, beetles, flies, and wasps can also be pollinators.
- Bats, birds, and hummingbirds can be pollinators, too.

Why pollinators matter

- Pollinators aid plant reproduction and are therefore critical to terrestrial--as opposed to underwater--ecosystems.
- More than 85% of flowering plants worldwide depend on pollinators, as do more than two-thirds of the species used for food.
- About 25% of birds and many mammals large and small depend on the fruits and seeds that result from insect pollination for much of their diets.
- Habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, pesticides, disease, and parasites are threatening pollinator populations everywhere.



What makes a plant pollinator-friendly?

- Needs pollinators to fertilize and produce seeds instead of being wind-pollinated.
- Female bees collect pollen to feed their offspring.
- Provides nectar to feed adult bees, moths, butterflies, and other pollinators.
- Thanks to co-evolution, native plants are generally the best sources of pollen and nectar for native pollinators.
- Is a host plant for butterfly or moth caterpillars. Most plant-eating insects can only develop and reproduce on plants that share an evolutionary history.

What pollinators need to thrive

- A succession of blooms from early in the spring through the fall.
- Groups of the same plants that make it more efficient for pollinators to move from flower to flower.
- Plants such as native bunchgrasses that provide shelter and places for nesting.
- Leaves, stems, hollow twigs, rotten logs, and branches for habitat.
- A source of clean water.



What pollinators don't want

- **Chemicals:** pesticides and herbicides kill them.
- **Weed cloth and heavy mulch:** 70% of native bees nest underground. Weed barrier should only be used under inorganic (rock, gravel, etc.) mulches. Organic mulches like bark will eventually break down and add organic matter to the soil.
- **Bright security lights** disorient insects and can kill them. Install a sensor on security lights and/or use yellow (LED) bulbs instead.
- **A neat and tidy landscape.** Don't cut your grasses and perennials back in the fall; someone may be overwintering in them. In the spring, wait until the soil is consistently above 50 degrees and you see pollinator activity before cleaning up.





Start planning your pollinator garden

- Choose a sunny, well-drained site.
- If you have a lawn, choose part (or all!) of it to be your pollinator garden. Your current lawn is likely an ecological dead zone.
- Get rid of any invasive species. If you live in Chelan County, the Weed Board can help.
- Plan ahead. Make a sketch, select the native plants you'd like to use, then make sure that they're available locally.

A close-up photograph of a bee on a yellow flower. The bee is positioned on the left side of the frame, facing right. It has a dark, segmented body with a prominent blueish-purple patch on its thorax. Its wings are partially visible, and its legs are tucked under its body. The flower is a vibrant yellow, with numerous stamens and pistils visible. The background is a soft, out-of-focus yellow, suggesting a field of similar flowers. Overlaid on the image is white text that reads: "Before we start talking about specific plants, do you have any questions about pollinators and their habitats?"

Before we start talking about specific plants, do you have any questions about pollinators and their habitats?



Key factors in choosing your plants

- Your location, soil type, and hardiness zone.
- Available space: Do you have room for trees and shrubs, or just perennials and annuals?
- Water needs: annual precipitation + any additional irrigation you're willing and able to provide.
- Bloom period: Include plants that bloom in spring, summer, and fall.
- Personal taste and style.

Native perennials for pollinator gardens

Common name	Bloom period	Caterpillar host	Butterfly nectar	For pollinators
Pearly everlasting	Mid	X	X	X
Showy milkweed	Early-mid	X	X	X
Buckwheats (Eriogonum spp.)	Mid-late	X	X	X
Lupines	Early	X	X	X
Western goldenrod	Mid-late	X	X	X
Fleabanes (Erigeron spp.)	Early	X	X	X
Yarrow	Mid-late		X	X
Arrowleaf balsamroot	Early		X	X
Blanketflower	Mid-late		X	X

More perennials, annuals, and grasses for pollinator gardens

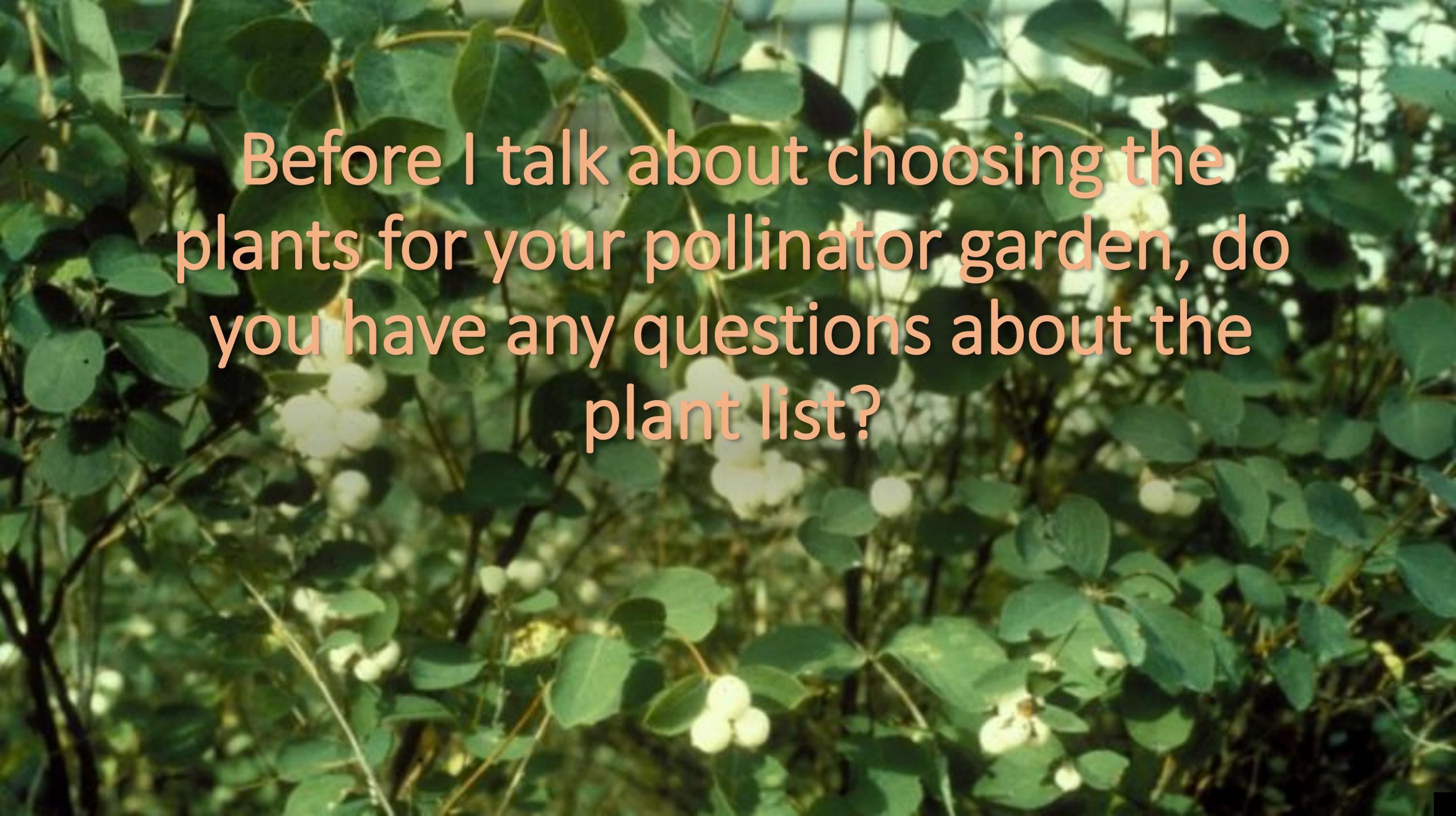
Common name	Bloom period	Caterpillar host	Butterfly nectar	For pollinators
Blue flax	Early-mid		X	X
Orange globemallow	Mid			X
Rocky Mountain Bee Plant (annual)	Early-late		X	X
Yellow Bee Plant (annual)	Early-late		X	X
Sunflowers (annual, perennial)	Mid-late	X	X	X
Indian ricegrass		X		
Bottlebrush squirreltail		X		
Idaho fescue		X		
Basin wildrye		X		

Native woody plants for pollinator gardens

Common name	Bloom period	Caterpillar host	Butterfly nectar	For pollinators
Douglas maple	Early	X		X
Douglas hawthorn	Early	X	X	X
Antelope bitterbrush	Early		X	X
Serviceberry	Early	X	X	X
Kinnikinnick (groundcover)	Early	X	X	X
Ceanothus	Early-mid	X	X	X
Bitter cherry, chokecherry	Early	X	X	X
Scouler's willow (upland species)	Early	X	X	X
Oceanspray	Mid	X	X	X

More woody plants for pollinator gardens

Common name	Bloom period	Caterpillar host	Butterfly nectar	For pollinators
Common snowberry	Mid	X		X
Gray rabbitbrush	Late	X	X	X
Golden currant	Early	X		X
Blue elderberry	Mid		X	X
Mockorange	Early-mid		X	X
Western clematis (vine)*	Early-mid		X	X
Oregon grape (evergreen)	Early		X	X
Purple sage	Mid		X	X
<i>*All parts of the plant are poisonous.</i>				



Before I talk about choosing the plants for your pollinator garden, do you have any questions about the plant list?

Choosing your pollinator plants

- You need at least one plant species for each season (early, mid, late) that is “for pollinators.”
- The plants should be adapted to your site conditions as much as possible.
- The more overlap the better, so early + early-mid + mid + mid-late + late will maximize forage for pollinators during the growing season.
- If you have space, include some woody plants and bunchgrasses; they also give your garden more structure.
- If you don't like a plant, don't use it!

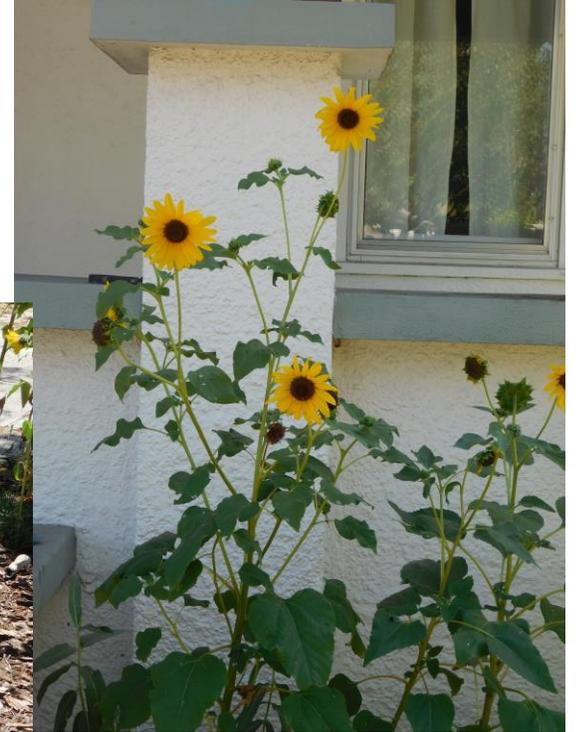




Example 1: A small urban pollinator garden

- Early bloomers: Douglas maple, wax currant, Rocky Mountain penstemon
- Early-mid bloomers: Showy milkweed, blue flax
- Mid bloomer: Common snowberry
- Mid-late bloomers: Snow buckwheat, yarrow, blanketflower, hairy golden aster, perennial and reseeding annual sunflowers
- Late bloomer: Gray rabbitbrush
- Bunchgrass: Idaho fescue

My pollinator-friendly small front yard with natives and sunflowers



Example 2: Refresh a large suburban yard

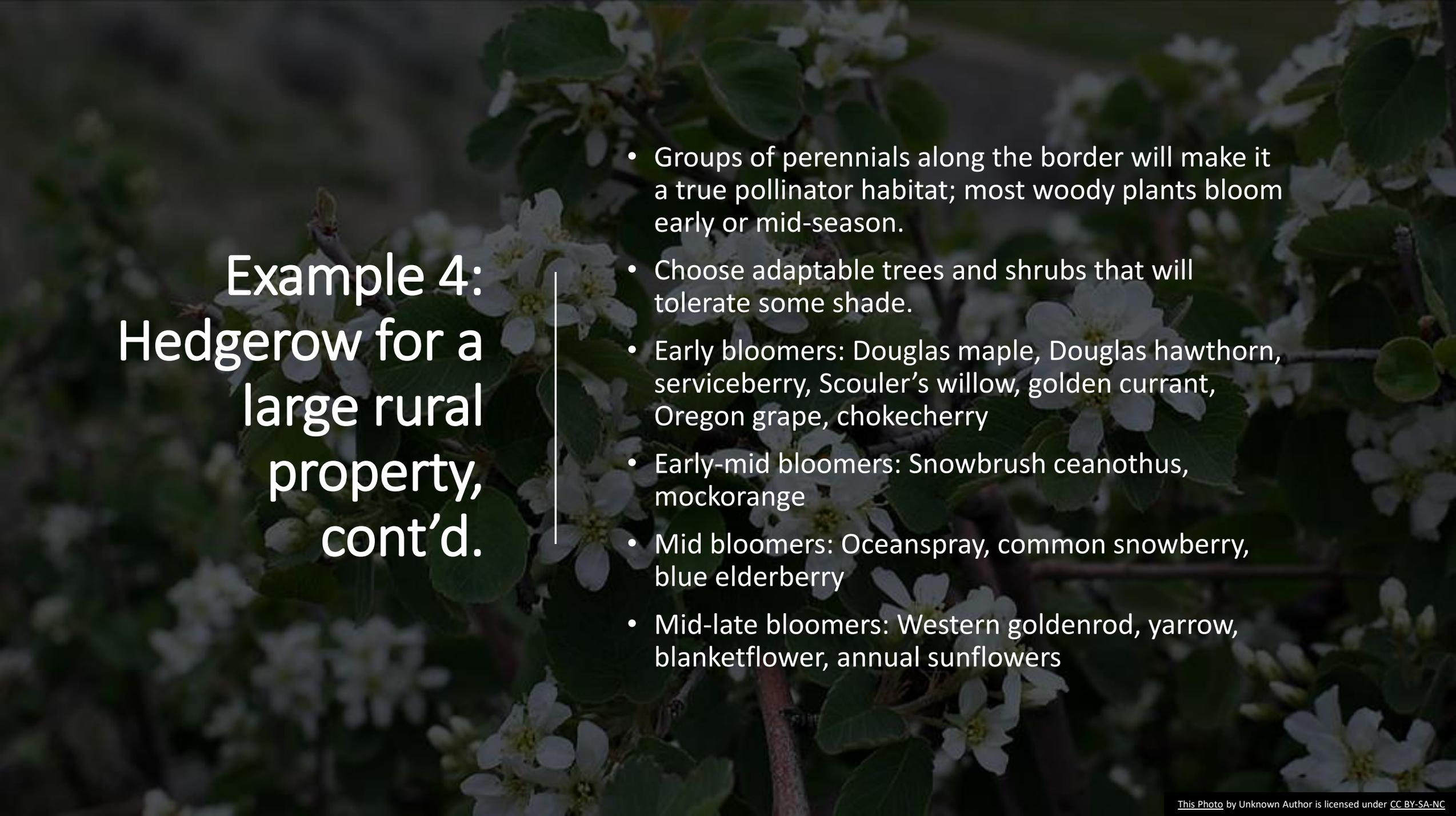
- Convert some of your lawn to a pollinator garden that includes small trees and shrubs.
- Early bloomers: Shrubby penstemon, Cardwell's penstemon, Douglas maple, serviceberry, kinnikinnick, golden currant, Oregon grape
- Early-mid bloomers: Blue flax, showy milkweed
- Mid bloomers: Pearly everlasting, oceanspray, common snowberry
- Mid-late bloomers: Snow buckwheat, western goldenrod, yarrow, annual sunflowers
- Late bloomers: Gray rabbitbrush
- Bunchgrasses: Idaho fescue, bottlebrush squirreltail, basin wildrye

Example 3: Plant over a septic field!

- In general, don't use any woody plants because the roots will grow too deeply. Design a path over your septic field and fill the resulting garden beds with flowers and grasses.
- Early bloomers: Cut-leaf penstemon, shrubby penstemon, Rocky Mountain penstemon
- Early-mid bloomers: Blue flax, showy milkweed
- Mid bloomers: Pearly everlasting, orange globemallow
- Mid-late bloomers: Creamy buckwheat, snow buckwheat, western goldenrod, hairy golden aster
- Bunchgrasses: Indian ricegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, Idaho fescue

Example 4: Hedgerow for a large rural property

- A traditional hedgerow is a row of mixed trees and shrubs alongside a road or property line.
- Hedgerows provide both privacy for humans and habitat for all kinds of animals.
- Remember to keep woody plants out of utility easements.
- If there are overhead utility lines, make sure the mature heights of the plants used will be below the lines.
- Keep a buffer between the street and the hedgerow to allow for vehicle line-of-sight and snow removal.



Example 4: Hedgerow for a large rural property, cont'd.

- Groups of perennials along the border will make it a true pollinator habitat; most woody plants bloom early or mid-season.
- Choose adaptable trees and shrubs that will tolerate some shade.
- Early bloomers: Douglas maple, Douglas hawthorn, serviceberry, Scouler's willow, golden currant, Oregon grape, chokecherry
- Early-mid bloomers: Snowbrush ceanothus, mockorange
- Mid bloomers: Oceanspray, common snowberry, blue elderberry
- Mid-late bloomers: Western goldenrod, yarrow, blanketflower, annual sunflowers

Plant and Seed Sources

- Derby Canyon Natives, Peshastin, WA (plants, grass seed): derbycanyonnatives.com, mel@derbycanyonnatives.com, 509.240.9792
- Methow Natives, Twisp, WA (plants, some seeds): www.methownative.com, MethowNatives1@gmail.com, 509.341.4060.
- Northwest Meadowscares, Port Townsend, WA (seeds only): northwestmeadowscares.com, info@northwestmeadowscares.com, 360.504.6415
- Western Native Seed, Coaldale, CO (seeds only): westernnativeseed.com, info@westernnativeseed.com, 719.942.3935 . Click on the plant name to get detailed information, including a map showing its native range.

Resources

- Partial List of Plant Species for Pollinator Habitat in the Inland Pacific Northwest [wapmcpo9185.pdf \(usda.gov\)](#)
- [Pollinator-Friendly Native Plant Lists | Xerces Society](#)
- Xerces Society, Washington Biology Technical Note 24 (Revised): Plants for Pollinators in the Inland Northwest <https://www.xerces.org/sites/default/files/publications/13-004.pdf>
- Derby Canyon Natives, Peshastin, Washington, Plants for Birds and Butterflies derbycanyonnatives.com/plants/for-birds-and-butterflies/
- Contact me at SeasonsUrbanHorticulture@gmail.com or 216.952.7750.

Further Reading

- “Attracting Native Pollinators: Protecting North America’s Bees and Butterflies,” The Xerces Society.
- “Nature’s Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard,” Douglas W. Tallamy.
- “The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden,” Douglas W. Tallamy and Rick Darke.