

DNR: Order native plants now to aid birds, bees, butterflies and more

Posted on Thursday, Mar 18, 2021

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) today announced that native plant sales are blooming across the state through April. By planting native plants, you can support the entire ecosystem by providing food for insects, birds, small mammals and other wildlife.

This year, local non-profits and governments are offering online or mail order options with pickup at local sites for spring plant sales.

Many of the native plant sales, offered by local non-profits and governments, are fundraisers that help to provide habitat for wildlife. Additionally, the growth of native plants can help revive habitat loss from years of intense use.

“Adding even a few native plants to your yard this spring can provide habitat for butterflies, bees, birds and other wildlife,” said Amy Staffen, DNR Conservation Biologist for the department’s Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHC). “These sales by local organizations and our Wisconsin native plant nurseries offer a convenient way to get started, whether you’re a beginner or more experienced gardener.”

The DNR has put together a list of list of 2021 native plant sales on the department’s [endangered resources webpage](#) for you to get your native plants order in for late spring and early summer planting.

Native plant sales are increasing across Wisconsin in March and April as local nonprofit organizations and governments offer online or mail order options with pickup at local sites this spring. Wisconsinites have a chance to buy plants from the comfort of their home to ensure their safety while benefiting local organizations.

Some deadlines for purchasing plants are approaching within the next month.

Scientists are documenting global declines in insect populations. These can be attributed in part to loss of habitat and food sources. While native insects evolved to detoxify and digest native plants, they lack the enzymes necessary to eat non-native plants, including ornamental trees and other plants commonly used in landscaping.

By planting native plants, you're boosting the web of life: Native plants feed insects, which in turn feed birds, bats, and other wildlife.

For instance, in east coast suburban neighborhoods where less than 70% of native vegetation remains, research shows that birds are not finding the insects they need to survive, and are having trouble reproducing, said Craig Thompson, the DNR's migratory bird expert who leads the department's Natural Heritage Conservation's Program Integration Section.

Some monarch butterflies in the eastern migratory population that are breeding in Wisconsin and other Midwestern states have dropped 80% over the last 20 years, said Brenna Jones, a DNR Conservation Biologist who coordinates the Wisconsin Monarch Collaborative. Winter counts in Mexico showed a 26% decline in 2020-21 from the previous year.

The Wisconsin Monarch Collaborative – formed in 2018 to catalyze voluntary planting of native milkweed and native wildflowers to benefit monarchs and help reverse their decline – recently released its [2018-2020 Key Accomplishments Report](#) detailing conservation efforts across the state.

Partners in the Collaborative are committed to engaging urban residents, farmers, businesses, rights-of-way managers and others to voluntarily add a total of about 120 million new milkweed plants within a diverse mix of native wildflowers to Wisconsin landscapes by 2038.

“The benefits of native plants don't end with habitat,” Staffen said. “Adding native plants can help landowners achieve other goals. Native plants used in a rain garden can help minimize flooding and filter out pollutants. The variety of colors, shapes and sizes adds beauty to any property.”

More Information on native plant sales, native plant nurseries, rain gardens,

pollinator gardens, how-to guidance documents, plant lists and more is available on the DNR's [endangered resources webpage](#).