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top 10 plants for pollinators

Posted in *All Gardening Advice, March, Cosmos* on 1st March 2021

If you're just starting to make a pollinator friendly garden or if you're new to gardening and want to add a few pollinator friendly plants but are not sure where to start then this is Sarah's top 10 list. These plants are her essentials which will help you create a wildlife haven but will also look fabulous too. Every garden should have a few of these.

- **Greater Knapweed** - Big and showy, like a cross between a cornflower and a thistle, with whiskery petals in a whorl. It is a valuable nectar source for insects and a favourite flower of butterflies, including the Marbled White and Dark Green Fritillary.
- **Lavender** - With my new pollinator obsessed hat on – these are the perfect plants. They look good all year, have incredible scent, which lasts when dried AND are rich in pollen and nectar for much of summer so the bees and butterflies love it.
- **Phacelia** - A beautiful plant, ideal as a cut flower and beloved by bees and an excellent attractant of lots of beneficial insects like lacewings and ladybirds. The hungry nymphs of both these insects then munch away on less welcome aphids.
- **Calendula** - I love marigolds in the garden and the cutting patch. *Calendula officinalis* 'Indian Prince' is a deep orange with crimson backs which match the crimson centre of the flower.
- **Foxgloves** - Foxgloves make some of the very best cottage garden early summer garden plants and cut flowers. If you pick the king flower – the main spire, you create lots of prince flowers and the plants will then go on flowering for longer.
- **Cosmos** - As well as being loved by bees and butterflies, cosmos last 10 days in the vase, produce at least two buckets of cut flowers a week from a 1 x 1m patch and do so from late June until November - so that's nearly fifty buckets of flowers in one season from a small patch. They are impossible to beat.
- **Cornflower** - This is one of the prettiest wildflowers, and it used to populate entire fields with it's incredible hue. It's juice even used to be extracted and mixed with alum to make a watercolour.
- **Wallflowers** - One of my favourite spring flowers, in the most wonderful rich colours, with one of the best ever scents. They also make superb cut flowers. We should all grow more.
- **Scabious** - It flowers for months, right through the summer, and has high-quality nectar for butterflies and bees. Many insects home in on it above other chalk meadow flowers, and finches and linnets love its seed.
- **Single or semi-double dahlias** - Dahlias produce buckets of cut flowers for months at a stretch. They're low maintenance - unless you have very hard ground frosts, mulch them deeply and leave in the ground from one year to the next.



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