

Best Practices

1. Invite the pollinators in!
2. Avoid toxins!
3. Rethink your lawn!
4. Do less fall cleanup!
5. Talk to your landscaper!
6. Be an ambassador!
7. Learn more!



1. Invite the pollinators in!

- a. Add [native plants](#) of any kind (ferns, grasses, wildflowers, shrubs, trees, and vines) to your yard, patio or balcony. Look for plants that are native to the CT or the Northeast U.S. These will provide food, shelter and breeding habitat for local pollinators and other beneficial wildlife and will be easier to maintain because they are well-adapted to our climate and soil.
- b. Plant wisely, matching [plant requirements](#) and [plant location](#) (e.g., sun, light, and ventilation needs, as well as soil type). This will increase the likelihood of having healthy, inviting plants and reduce any need for pesticides.
- c. Select a [variety of plants](#) to provide food for wildlife all year long (pollen, nectar, fruit and seeds).
- d. Replace [invasive plants](#) with natives whenever possible to protect the ecosystem

2. Avoid toxins!

- a. Rethink your tolerance for small problems. Some insect damage is expected in a balanced ecosystem.
- b. When more significant plant problems occur, it is important to correctly identify the problem. Consult with local garden shops and nurseries or the [UConn Extension Master Gardener Program's free Plant Clinic](#) (offered during growing season at the Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens).
- c. After identifying the problem, consider the least toxic treatment option first.
- d. If you still need to use a pesticide, read the labels carefully and follow all instructions (including how and when to apply) to protect people, pets and beneficial wildlife. Use caution with homemade recipes for pesticides and with those labeled "organic" as they are often just as toxic as synthetic choices.
- e. If a plant is repeatedly attacked by a disease or pest, consider replacing it with a more resistant or resilient species (instead of continuing to treat with toxic chemicals).
- f. Be sure purchased plants have not been treated with systemic toxic chemicals.
- g. Some of the sprays used for mosquitos, [ticks](#) and [deer](#) can also be harmful to people, pets, pollinators and other beneficial wildlife. Use [chemical-free options](#) to reduce the need for spraying to manage these pests whenever possible.
- h. Do not use rodenticides as these toxins also kill the predator birds (e.g., hawks and eagles) that eat the rodents. Use mechanical traps as an alternative.

3. Rethink your lawn!

- a. Reduce the size of your lawn, converting some lawn to planting beds with native plants (or even meadows if possible!).
- b. Keep grass clippings, which are rich in nitrogen, on your lawn to reduce the need for fertilizers.
- c. Eliminate fertilizer applications or reduce your applications to once or twice per year. Use organic, slow-release, fertilizers that are less harmful to the environment.
- d. Cut grass high (4") to shade out weeds and reduce watering needs.
- e. [Test your soil](#) and replace only those nutrients missing with organic supplements.

- f. Rethink your [definition of weeds](#) (undesirable plants) as many common weeds are critical food sources and host plants for pollinators and should be left in your yard.
- g. If [grubs](#) are a problem, use cultural and safer organic treatments.
- h. Use electric or battery-powered lawn equipment which has a lower carbon footprint and generates less noise pollution.

4. Do less fall clean-up!

- a. Pollinators and other beneficial insects need the food and safe habitats provided by leaves, plant seed heads and dried perennial stalks to get through the winter. Additionally, as these materials decompose, nutrients are added to the soil naturally.
- b. [Leave most perennial stalks](#) in your planting beds in the fall. In the spring, after beneficial wildlife has emerged or hatched, the dead material can be left in the beds where it will decompose, or it can be removed for a neater appearance.
- c. Mow-mulch some of your leaves into the lawn and [leave \(or mulch and return\) some leaves](#) in your planting beds.
- d. [Start composting organic material](#) removed from your planting beds and from your kitchen to reduce waste. The compost will fertilize your plants, improve the soil, and store carbon.

5. Talk to your landscaper!

- a. Inform your landscaper you want a healthier yard and discuss the best practices you want to implement. If they are not responsive, talk to other [sustainable landscaping companies](#).
- b. Ask your landscaper not to use chemicals. At the very least, know which chemicals are being used and how toxic they are. Read the labels or [research them](#) and have further discussions about eliminating them.

6. Be an ambassador!

- a. Install a [Pollinator Pathway sign](#) in your yard.
- b. Talk to your neighbors about the changes you are making.
- c. Encourage your neighbors to join the Pollinator Pathway.

7. Learn more!

- a. Seek out information about how to be pollinator friendly.
- b. Attend ecological gardening talks and workshops offered in our area. Many are free or low-cost.
- c. Consider enrolling in the [UConn Extension Master Gardener Program](#), offered each year at the Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens.

Excellent general resource: Healthy Yards: <https://www.healthyyards.org/>