



# Life as We Know It Depends on **INSECTS!**

Invertebrate (e.g. insect) abundance has declined 45% globally since 1974. And guess what? There are three billion fewer breeding birds today than 50 years ago. It's all connected!

You can make a difference with your property, no matter how big or small. Plant natives! And plant natives that support a high number of pollinators and caterpillars. Pollinators are required by 88% of plants; caterpillars transfer more energy from plants to other animals than any other insect.

We can no longer rely on "nature" to support enough insects. Food production now claims nearly one half of the world's terrestrial surface (no bugs allowed) and other areas that we think of as "natural" are often full of non-native plants that don't support local insects. Why? Plants have evolved defenses over time to protect themselves from insects. Insects that haven't evolved with those plants struggle to overcome their adaptations, such as chemicals to make leaves bitter-tasting.

Why does this matter? Well, if insects were to disappear, most flowering plants would become extinct and a variety of creatures wouldn't have bugs to eat. That would cause the rapid collapse of the webs that support all life – including us!

Five percent of our native plants make 75% of the food that drives food webs. Fourteen percent of our native plants make 90%. Use the National Wildlife Foundation Native Plant Finder to get planting recommendations specific to your zip code.

[nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/Plants](http://nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/Plants)



# Live in 19081?

## Plant Flowers like these:

- **GOLDENROD** (*Solidago*) – Supports 126 butterfly and moth species that use them as host plants for caterpillars
- **ASTER** (*Aster*) — Supports 115 species
- **STRAWBERRY** (*Fragaria*) — Supports 77 species
- **SUNFLOWER** (*Helianthus*) — Supports 71 species
- **JOE-PYE WEED** (*Eupatorium*) — Supports 35 species

## Plant Trees and Shrubs like these:

- **OAK** (*Quercus*) — Supports 519 butterfly and moth species that use them as host plants for caterpillars
- **CHERRY, PLUM** (*Prunus*) — Supports 435 species
- **BIRCH** (*Betula*) — Supports 381 species
- **ASPEN, COTTONWOOD, POPLAR** (*Populus*) — Supports 331 species
- **BLUEBERRY, CRANBERRY** (*Vaccinium*) — Supports 281 species
- **BLACKBERRY, RASPBERRY** (*Rubus*) — Supports 162 species

Keep in mind that there are several non-native varieties of some of these plants. For example, Himalayan blackberries vs. American blackberries. You can research online at sites like the NWF Native Plant Finder ([nwf.org/nativeplantfinder](http://nwf.org/nativeplantfinder)) or The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center ([wildflower.org/plants](http://wildflower.org/plants)). Alternatively, buy from a local Native Plant nursery.

## What else can you do?

1. Reduce your lawn area. Plant native vegetation there instead.
2. Remove and replace non-native species.
3. Provide a “soft landing” for caterpillars. Make a layered landscape or leave leaf litter in place around natives since most caterpillars pupate in the ground, not on the plant.
4. Reduce your light pollution — put motion sensors on security lights or use yellow LED lights.
5. Stop mosquito spraying — Mosquito sprays hurt more than just mosquitoes! You also kill fireflies, bees, monarch caterpillars, and many others.
6. Minimize insecticide use.

## Want to know more?



Watch “A Guide to Restoring the Little Things That Run the World” by entomologist Doug Tallamy at [youtube.com/watch?v=mFcNLxjL104](https://youtube.com/watch?v=mFcNLxjL104)