



Cropping and land management

Cost-share and technical assistance

THE WISCONSIN POLLINATOR PROTECTION PLAN

Farmers & Growers

Best Management Practices to Protect Pollinators

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

For growers raising crops that rely on insect pollination, the benefit of taking steps to protect pollinators is clear. However, all growers and farmers can benefit from pollinator-friendly practices because these practices can encourage pest-eating beneficial insects, limit soil erosion and nutrient loss, provide forage for grazers, and create habitat for game species and other wildlife. You can read more details in the Wisconsin Pollinator Protection Plan online.

Attracting pollinators to farms depends heavily on land management practices in cropped and fallow areas.

- Outside crop fields
 - Leave existing nesting habitat, such as dead wood, bare soil patches, hollow stems, and bunch grasses.
 - Add wildflower strips or flowering hedgerows on field margins or in roadside ditches. Planting native milkweed is crucial for supporting monarch butterfly recovery.
 - Plant wildflowers on land not suitable for crops, such as steep slopes, stream banks, and wet areas.
- Inside crop fields
 - Use pollinator-attractive plants for intercropping or cover crops to increase yields of adjacent pollinator-dependent crops.
 - Grow multiple types of blooming crops to increase pollinator diversity and yields of pollinator-dependent crops, and to diversify your income stream.
 - Use shallower tilling and leave margins untilled to help ground-nesting bees.
- Inside and outside crop fields
 - Change mowing or haying practices to allow flowering plants to bloom in field margins or between crop rows.
 - Plant pollinator-dependent crops in smaller fields that allow fuller access to wild pollinators nesting in field margins.
- In pastures
 - Incorporate flowering legumes, such as clover.
 - Adjust your rotation pattern to allow some paddocks to bloom fully.

Installing pollinator-friendly practices requires upfront costs, and establishment takes several years, but there are federal and state programs that may be able to provide some funding and technical expertise.

- **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):**
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives>
- **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Reserve Program:**
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/crp-conservation-reserve-program>

Pesticides

- **Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP):**
https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/CREP.aspx
- **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Landowner Incentive Program (LIP):**
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/endangeredresources/lip.html>

Farmers and growers face the difficult challenge of minimizing crop pests while attracting beneficial insects – pollinators and pest predators. Remember, the label is always the law and drift is always illegal. Please note that pesticides approved for use in organic agriculture are not necessarily safe for bees and other pollinators.

- Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) guidelines:
 - Identify the pest and degree of infestation before treating.
 - Use established economic thresholds to decide when you need to use control measures.
 - Practice preventive management, such as planting resistant varieties and using cultural control practices.
- Pay attention to pesticide labels that say "highly toxic to bees," "toxic to bees," or "extended residual toxicity."
- Choose products that are less toxic to pollinators, using available online tools. (refer to Resources below.)
- Avoid spraying blooming plants while pollinators are visiting them, including crops, field margins, and ditches. Night spraying may avoid some harm to pollinators, but beneficial predators of pests may be most active at night.
- Remember that systemic pesticides applied to soil or seeds may be present in the pollen or nectar even if you apply the product before bloom.
- Don't use treated seed unless you have diagnosed a pest problem. If you use it:
 - Remove blooming crop weeds before planting.
 - Use seed treatments designed to reduce dust, which may stick to bees and get taken back to their nests. If you use a dust formulation, use deflectors to direct dust downward.
- Consider using buffer strips between pollinator habitat and land that you treat regularly.
- Check Fieldwatch™ for any nearby bee yards before using pesticides. Refer to Resources.

Spread the word

Monitoring pollinator population trends to document what management practices work is important for both pollinator health and crop production.

- Share your practices with your neighbors, grower groups, and agronomy businesses.
- When asked, participate in scientific research to help answer questions about pollinator health in agricultural settings.

Resources

- **Wisconsin Pollinator Protection Plan:** <https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents/PPPComplete.pdf>
- **University of Wisconsin-Extension publication "What's on Your Seed":**
<https://corn.agronomy.wisc.edu/Management/pdfs/IPMWhatsOnYourSeed.pdf>
- **American Seed Trade Association:** <https://seed-treatment-guide.com/resources/for-farmers>
- **Stewardship Guidelines and Best Management Practices for Neonicotinoid-Treated Seed:**
https://www.mda.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2019-05/neonictreatedseedbmps_0.pdf
- **Pesticides toxicity rankings:** <http://www2.ipm.ucanr.edu/bee precaution>
- **Fieldwatch™:** <https://wi.driftwatch.org/map>