

Annuals That Pollinators Love

Conservation biologist Douglas Tallamy (*Nature’s Best Hope*, 2019) urges us to use our gardens to help fight looming threats to life on Planet Earth, two being shrinking agricultural land and loss of habitat for our vital pollinators. How can we use our little plots to impact such huge issues while also beautifying our landscapes? Dr. Tallamy assures us that our combined efforts can go a long way toward correcting both problems. So, this winter as we pore over gardening catalogs, we who have enlisted in the cause of supporting pollinators should pay extra attention to seed and plant descriptions, looking for evidence of plentiful pollen and nectar supplies for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, etc.

One small way to focus is by looking for colorful, pollinator-friendly annuals to incorporate among the perennials, herbs, vegetables, native wildflowers, etc., in our garden plans. Annuals that are both ornamental and beneficial include easy-to-grow cosmos, marigolds, sunflowers, coreopsis, salvias, and zinnias. Some can be obtained as nursery starts, while all can be seeded directly into the soil. With proper care, especially deadheading, they can provide color and pollinator food for a season. Their flattish, daisy-like flower heads make rich pollen and nectar supplies easily accessible to bees (the most important pollinators), butterflies such as Monarchs and Swallowtails, and certain flies. On zinnias, for example, pollen and nectar sources make up a yellow center, easy for pollinators to spot, except perhaps for showy fully double varieties that tend to bury the food supply.

Plant breeders tempt us every year with exotic cultivars and hybrids of familiar annuals. These promise color and interest, but many fail to feed pollinators. The features that supply rich pollen and nectar may have been weakened



Music Box Mix sunflower



Lemon Queen sunflower



Summer Jewel Pink salvia



Purple Fairy Tale salvia

or bred out. For example, pollen-free sunflowers touted for cut flower arrangements may be colorful but are useless to pollinators. Cultivars bred from flowers that are normally flat and daisy-like instead have dense pom-poms that look quirky and cute but make pollen and nectar too difficult for bees and butterflies to reach. Unless a new variety promises great benefits, tried and true standards may be the best bets for pollinators.

A four-year research project by University of Minnesota Extension (2015-2018) studied more than 30 annual varieties and identified the following nine as the most popular with pollinators:

- **Music Box Mix sunflower**, a colorful dwarf, good for containers
- **Lemon Queen sunflower**, a towering heirloom with bright yellow flowers
- **Summer Jewel Pink salvia**, loved by bumblebees
- **Purple Fairy Tale salvia**
- **Orange Fudge Black-eyed Susan**
- **Prairie Sun Black-eyed Susan** with large deep gold and yellow flowers
- **Showstar Butter Daisy** with masses of small yellow flowers
- **Dakota Gold Sneezeweed**, loved by native bees and syrphid flies
- Pale yellow to lime-green **Envy Zinnia**

While some of these should be started early, selecting them might be worth the effort to find out how well they draw pollinators to an Ohio garden. However, many varieties of the annuals mentioned in paragraph 2 are easy to find and grow here, all for the good of pollinators, glorious garden scapes, and Planet Earth.

—The Gardener at The Quarry Farm

(Plant species photo credit: halifaxseed.ca; Pine Tree Garden Seeds; Thompson & Morgan; Suttons; Swallowtail Garden Seeds; sandysplants.com; Minneopa Orchards; Oklahoma State University; edenbrothers.com)



Orange Fudge Black-eyed Susan



Prairie Sun Black-eyed Susan



Showstar Butter Daisy



Dakota Gold Sneezeweed



Envy Zinnia

Winter 2025 Programs & Events

Dress for the weather, including good walking shoes, and meet in Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora. There is no fee to participate unless noted otherwise. Tax-deductible donations are welcome.

Valentine’s Day Hike for the Birds

Friday, February 14, 8:30 a.m.

Birds are everywhere, all the time, doing fascinating things. Dress for the weather and bring your binoculars as we document the many species of birds that shelter here in winter. All recorded species will be submitted to the international Great Backyard Bird Count.

Worm Moon Hike

Friday, March 14, 7:30 p.m.

March’s full moon is commonly called the Full Worm Moon. This is because of the earthworms that wriggle out of the ground as the earth begins to thaw in March. We hope to see this early spring moon and hear some owls. If the moon is behind the clouds, we will still enjoy a lantern hike through the woods.

Women for the Land: Birding Workshop

Thursday, April 10, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

(Register by calling Putnam County Soil & Water Conservation District at 419-523-5159)

Identify birds with Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) educational staff as your guides. Enjoy early spring wildflowers as you hike The Quarry Farm’s nature preserve trails and enjoy stop at Steve’s summer kitchen bakery.



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Do you have questions, want to schedule an outing or workshop for your group or keep up with what’s happening here? Email thequarryfarm@gmail.com, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and visit www.thequarryfarm.org or call 567-376-0705.

Donations to The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a 501(c)(3) public charity, are tax-deductible.



Mission Statement

It is our goal and mission to provide the opportunity for people of all ages to increase their understanding of the natural environment of Northwest Ohio and to interact with their fellow inhabitants in a sustainable manner.



October's Northern Lights were spectacular over the summer kitchen and pollinator gardens.

The Quarry Farm Newsletter is a quarterly publication for supporters of The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a nonprofit organization in Pandora, Ohio.

On the cover: A whitetail deer shelters in the prairie grassland in winter. While this species is rare onsite most of the year, deer gather in the woods during the coldest months.

All photographs printed in this newsletter were taken on The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm.

www.thequarryfarm.org



Under One Big Sky

Ten years ago, Erin (Seitz) Fitch bounced the idea of organizing a fundraising 5K run/walk on behalf of The Quarry Farm. Thanks to all 5K runners and walkers who lined up at the start for the Oct. 12, 2024 walk/run. It was a beautiful morning event that raised funds for the work that we do. Congratulations to Kendrick Schumacher and Michelle Klausing for winning first place mugs.

With the scheduled hike leader under the weather, Deb Weston stepped in to lead the National Hiking Day Hike on Nov. 17. Attendees included visitors who made the trek from Columbus. They were excited to spot a massive hornets' nest high in a tree, which was a great image after so few insects were seen this past summer. The hikers were a month late and just a week early for The Quarry Farm's 149th and 150th avian species sightings: A Red-shouldered Hawk (Oct. 6) and a flock of Tundra Swan on Nov. 24.

Dupont Kingdom Kids Preschool (*at right*) made a field trip across the county to make hiking sticks and put them to work on the trails. They brought produce for the farm animals and were especially popular with Buddy the Donkey.

Estella the Virginia Opossum did a lot of community outreach for her fellow North American marsupials in October. She was the star of Trinity United Methodist Church's Oct. 30 KidVenture Wednesday and attended a fall festival at Emmanuel Lutheran Church of Bluffton.

November nights are often cold. The animals need increased feed and straw as the pasture grass retreats for winter. On November 7, Dave and Jane Hilty arrived in their truck, pulling a wagonload of pumpkins to boost calories. When these Great Pumpkins visit in autumn, squashy orange fruits rain from the sky and burst open with seedy, sweet goodness. Just as the wagon began to get low, Walter Cusick and his parents Megan and Tim stepped in with a new pumpkin supply (*below*).



Kendrick Schumacher (center) and Michelle Klausing (right) took first places in the 2024 5K.



As pigs get older, they tend to lose weight and their hooves and knees ache just as our human joints do. Pot-bellies Beatrice and Bob Barker are seniors who receive supplements and medication for arthritis. Like most humans, it takes a spoonful of sugar to make the medicine go down. In their case, the meds are hidden in peanut-butter-smear cookies left over from December's Cookie Hike.

Resident Spotlight: Chicken Ricky

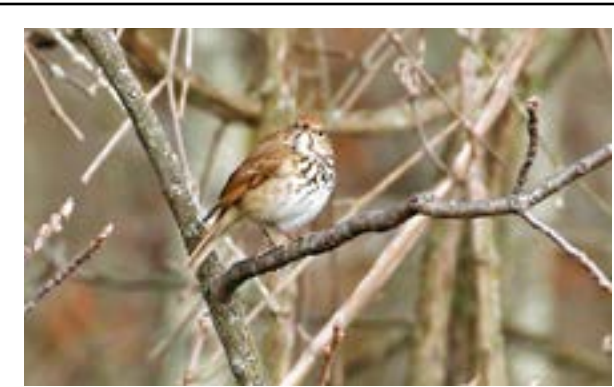
The outdoor temperature is 18 degrees F as I write this, with the forecast predicted to drop to 0 degrees tonight. But that is a heatwave compared to what is predicted for one week from today. After an atmospheric ruse of balmy temps in the 30s, the thermometer will dip below 0 for at least one night. As the sun lowers behind the western treeline, we will send the flock to bed then run shivering for the house and hot chocolate.

There is a routine for tucking everyone in at night in the farm animal sanctuary. Summertime bedtime is much more relaxed. Water is topped off and everyone who is shut in for the night reluctantly flaps into their coop. The ducks race around to snag a few more insects but do eventually settle in behind closed doors. Winter is much more challenging; sometimes frightening when winds are high and temperatures are low. We plan for such conditions. Potatos, oatmeal, apples, and other treats are purchased in quantity to provide more cold-weathering calories to all animals and birds. Straw beds are thickened. The mammals that don't have naturally thick winter coats are dressed in windbreaking thermal blanket coats. The geese tuck their feet close to their downy bodies and snuggle their bills under water-repellent wings, although K the Canada Goose prefers to nest with the hens on the bitterest nights.

We cannot plan for Ricky the rooster. This bold white rooster appeared on the front gate one summer day, even though we specifically ask people not to abandon animals, just as all rescues do. There is a balance here that is easily tipped, especially with roosters. They will fight--sometimes kill--each other for dominance if too many are in one place. The battles stress out other species, with tensions rising among the other birds and even the mammals. Ricky rode the fence for weeks. He visited Neighbor Casey, who christened the cocky fellow "Chicken Ricky." Efforts to corral him at night failed as he does not fall into the sunset stupor that most chickens do. Eventually, he made the decision (probably after a close call with an owl) to spend his nights perched near vigilant donkeys and pigs. Winter's worst forced Ricky to be a bit more sensible. On the coldest days, Ricky snuggles his orange feet in the coat of a woolly goat or Willy the Three-legged Sheep. At night, he nestles in the long, low building with Alphonse the pot-bellied pig. They are often joined by a growing number of hens that seem to find him so irresistible that they will forego a warm nest box for a piggy nest of straw and a brawny, frosty rooster.



Chicken Ricky uses Willy as a slipper



'Never Seen So Many Hermit Thrush in One Day'

Deb Weston and David Smith kept their eyes on Fall 2024 Bird Migration. They documented 25 bird species on their Oct. 16 morning walk. Deb, who often wears her camera as a third arm, captured a photo of a Ruby-crowned Kinglet (they saw six) and a couple pics of Hermit Thrush.

"Neither one of us have ever seen so many Hermit Thrush in one day," she said. "We saw maybe six or seven out in the prairie." Other highlights on their checklist included one Purple Finch, 17 White-throated Sparrow, and a Great Horned Owl call.

Thank you...

...to the Cusick family for pumpkins
...to the Erchenbrechers for sharing garden produce
...Dave and Jane Hilty for the wagonload of pumpkins
...to Kingdom Kids Preschool for produce
...to David Seitz for honeysuckle and vine removal and hydrological engineering
...to David Smith and Deb Weston for sharing their birding expertise and beautiful bird photos

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