

SPRING PLANTS FOR POLLINATORS

Our native prairie flora contains a plethora of species with outstanding pollinator value that flower from early July to early October. However, providing an ample supply of nectar in spring and early summer is more of a challenge.

For woodland settings, a great diversity of spring wildflowers can provide nectar for pollinators in April and early May. Some of the most easily cultivated include Celandine Poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*), Wild Stonecrop (*Sedum ternatum*), and Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*).

In early May, the yellow flowers of Golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*) are an excellent nectar source. This plant does double duty as a host plant for Black Swallowtail larvae. Several species of penstemon also flower in May. Earliest is Hairy Beardtongue (*Penstemon hirsutus*), followed by the simultaneous flower of Foxglove Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*) and Smooth Beardtongue (*Penstemon calycosus*).

Wild Indigos are outstanding species for attracting bees. Cream Wild Indigo (*Baptisia leucophaea* or *bracteata*) flowers in early May, followed by Blue Wild Indigo (*Baptisia australis*) in late May. White Wild Indigo (*Baptisia leucantha* or *alba*) is considerably later, flowering from mid June to mid July.

Several other easily-cultivated prairie species flower from late May until early July. Lance-leaf Coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*) produces abundant yellow flowers in late May and June. Ohio Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*) produces new flowers every morning for a month-long period from early June to early July. Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is one of the earliest milkweeds to bloom, sporting brilliant orange flowers as early as Memorial Day in some years. Finally, the long drooping rays of Pale Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*) round out the easily-cultivated early prairie species, flowering from late May until late June.

PLANT FEATURE: SMOOTH BEARDTONGUE (*PENSTEMON CALYCOSUS*)



The most commonly occurring native Beardtongue in central Indiana features variably colored lavender to light purple flowers on 18 inch stalks. The smooth foliage is nearly indistinguishable from the white-flowered Foxglove Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*). Smooth Beardtongue is easily grown in cultivation in moist to well-drained soil and sun to mostly shade. The flower color is typically more intense on plants that receive more sun. Unfortunately, this neat, attractive plant is seldom used in the landscape in spite of its many attributes.

Native habitats of *Penstemon calycosus* include floodplain woods, open wooded slopes and woodland edges. In a restoration, it will grow equally well on floodplain terraces or upland woods with associates in our [Upland Woodland Mix](#).