

## Pollinator Plants for Woodland Settings

When the subject of pollinator plantings comes up in the Midwest, most people think of the flowers of the tallgrass prairie for good reason. There are numerous quality nectar sources among our tallgrass natives. Much of the eastern Midwest, however was formerly dominated by woodland and contains numerous woodland remnants, many of which have become overgrown with invasive shrubs. When land stewards remove these shrubs from degraded urban woodlands, it allows more sun to reach the floor, providing an opportunity to establish plants beneficial to pollinators once the follow up treatments are complete.

Many native bees such as bumblebees forage in the woodlands for nectar in early spring, taking advantage of the numerous spring wildflowers that bloom on the forest floor. While many of these spring wildflowers lack commercial availability, species such as wild columbine (*Aquilegia Canadensis*), celandine poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*), wild blue phlox (*Phlox divaricata*), Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), and wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*) are available from reputable nurseries. The composites golden ragwort (*Packera aurea*) and roundleaf ragwort (*Packera obovata*) also contribute to pollinators in spring woodlands. Later in the spring, smooth beardtongue (*Penstemon calycosus*) is a great plant for bees.

Although summer flowering plants are less abundant in woodland areas, plants such as downy skullcap (*Scutellaria incana*) and false sunflower (*Heliopsis helianthoides*) are excellent for pollinators. Later in the summer white snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*) and sweet joe-pye weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*) provide nectar.

Fall brings another round of valuable pollinator plants, especially asters and goldenrods. Asters include side-flowering aster (*Symphyotrichum lateriflorum*), heart-leaved blue wood aster (*Symphyotrichum cordifolium*), and Short's aster (*Symphyotrichum shortii*). Woodland goldenrods include zig-zag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*) and blue-stemmed goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*).

## Plant Feature: Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)

Wild geranium is a common woodland wildflower that makes an excellent addition to a woodland garden or shady area on the north side of a building. The showy pink flowers typically bloom between mid April and mid May. It grows about 1 foot in height and has attractive foliage throughout the growing season. Wild geranium spreads by woody rhizomes to form large clumps. It is best in partial to filtered shade in well-drained soils.

In a restoration, wild geranium should be utilized in well-drained woodland site with associates from our [Upland Woodland Mix](#).

