



# Some Pollinators You Might Encounter in Your Garden or Home Meadow

Butterflies and honeybees frequently come to mind as pollinators, but when you look closely at the insects on your flowers, you will see a whole world beyond those familiar insects. For example, bumblebees, mason bees, many moths, and some wasps, beetles, and flies act as pollinators.

Spicebush Swallowtail nectaring on Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), a plant too aggressive for small gardens.



A tiny Golden Green Sweat Bee on Common Milkweed.



Eggs of Milbert's Tortoiseshell Butterfly on its caterpillar host, the Nettle genus (*Urtica*).

**Habitat for pollinator insects also includes the "host" plants whose leaves provide food for the insects' young (called "larvae," or, in the case of butterflies and moths, "caterpillars").**



Monarch caterpillar host plants are Milkweeds (species of genus *Asclepias*).

**Milkweeds are known as host plants for Monarch Butterflies, but they also are an excellent nectar source used by a diversity of insects.**



*Strangalepta abbreviata*, a species of Flower Longhorn Beetle, drinking nectar from Common Milkweed.

The Nettle family (Urticaceae) serves as host for Red Admiral caterpillars (adult pictured here). Note damage to these Nettle leaves left by Milbert's Tortoiseshell caterpillars.



Great Golden Digger Wasp on Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), a plant whose smaller size is suited to small gardens.



Adult Monarch butterfly drinking nectar of New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*). Adult butterflies take nectar from many species, but are very restricted in which host plants they will lay eggs upon.



Gray Hairstreak on Broad-leaved Mountain-mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*).



Noble Scoliid on Broad-leaved Mountain-mint.



*Judolia cordifera* (a species of Flower Longhorn Beetle) on Narrow-leaved Mountain-mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*).

*In their quest for food (nectar and pollen) from flowers, insects unintentionally carry pollen from one flower to the next. For pollination to take place, the insect must be bringing pollen from the same flower species at a stage when the receiving flowers are receptive to pollen. It takes a huge number of insects to make this process work. It is helpful to plant more than one individual of the same species.*

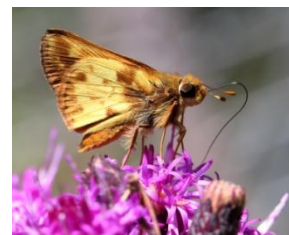
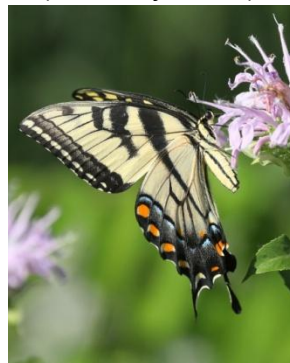


*Strangalia famelica* (a species of Flower Longhorn Beetle) taking nectar from Steeplebush (*Spiraea tomentosa*).



*Agapostemon virescens* (a species of Striped Sweat Bee) diving into New York Ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*).

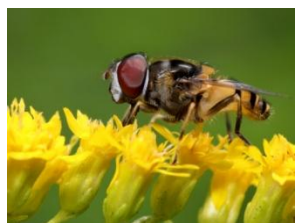
Eastern Tiger Swallow-tail taking nectar from Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*).



Zabulon Skipper sucking nectar of New York Ironweed through its long, curved, straw-like proboscis.

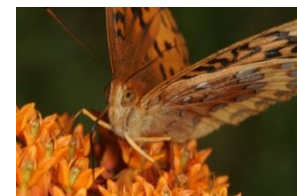


Hummingbird Moth extending its curved proboscis as it approaches a Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*).



Hover Fly (Syrphidae) on Goldenrod (*Solidago* species).

Great Spangled Fritillary nectaring on Butterfly Milkweed.

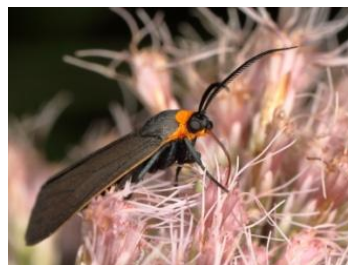


***These three plants below showed up on their own in a meadow. When plants just show up, you may wish to keep such "found" plants (regardless of whether they are found in the nursery trade).***

Common Eastern Bumblebee on New England Aster collecting pollen to feed its young. Note the orange, full pollen sac on its hind leg.



Yellow-collared Scape Moth on native Aster (*Symphyotrichum* sp.).



Yellow-collared Scape Moth on native Joe-Pye Weed (*Eutrochium* sp.).



Milbert's Tortoiseshell adults are happy to drink nectar from the non-native Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*).



Photos by David Silsbee, commentary by Charlotte Pyle, Chair, CIPWG Native Alternatives Subcommittee, Aug. 2023