



## Native Plant Ambassador Talking Points

Native plants are the foundation of a healthy ecosystem. Every creature, including humans, depends on native plants.

Pollinators provide an essential service to all creatures.

- Pollination is key to the production of oxygen.
- Pollinated plants sequester carbon and combat climate change.
- Pollinated plants help to purify our water and prevent erosion.
- Pollinated plants return moisture to the atmosphere and control our weather.
- Pollination is responsible for more than 150 food crops.

Native bees are by far our most efficient pollinators.

Alarmingly, habitat loss has caused the Midwest to lose half of its native bees this century. Loss of plant diversity (native plants) is the primary cause of native bee decline. About 30-50% of all native bees are highly specialized. This means they can only use the pollen of one species of native plant to feed their larva. If the plant they rely on disappears, the bees disappear too.

Other beneficial insects are also disappearing at a shocking rate. It is estimated that the world's insect population has declined almost 30 percent in 3 decades. Monarch butterflies, alone, have declined more than 90 percent in recent years. They can no longer find the native milkweed in our landscapes that their caterpillars need to feed on.

Many of our most beneficial insects cannot reproduce without the native plants with which they have co-evolved.

The decline in insects has been catastrophic to many of our native bird species. In fact, we have lost nearly 3 billion birds in recent decades. They no longer have enough insects to feed their young. Butterfly and moth caterpillars are the best food source for nesting birds. Just like the monarch, most species of butterflies and moths have declined drastically due to the lack of the native plants they need to breed.

This has a great impact on humans as birds provide essential ecosystem services.

- Birds keep destructive agricultural insects in check.
- Birds pollinate many larger flowering plants.
- Birds prevent disease through the removal of waste.
- Birds spread seeds and restore ecosystems.
- Birds sustain natural landscapes which help to store carbon and keep the climate stable.

Without native plants critical insects can't survive.

Without insects birds can't survive.

Without insects and birds humans can't survive.

If all insects on Earth disappeared, within 50 years all life on earth would end. If all human beings disappeared from the Earth, within 50 years all forms of life would flourish. ~Jonas Salk

What can we do to help?

Plant Native!

This problem can only be solved through the efforts of private landowners, not government legislation. More than 85% of Illinois is privately owned. What we plant at our own home or business can have a great impact on our environment. Together we can make a difference!

**Every Plant Counts!**