

What is Bird and Bee Friendly Farming?

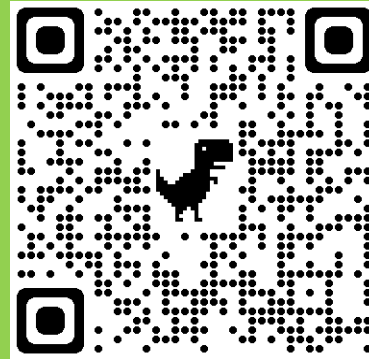
Birds and pollinators need our help! Many native species have declined or have already disappeared from Vermont. To support their recovery and survival, we can weave natural habitat patches into the agricultural landscape to provide essential foraging, breeding, and shelter resources.

Our Bird and Bee Friendly Farming initiative focuses on enhancing marginal areas out of production (i.e., field edges, hedgerows, and fallow fields) as well as grasslands, forest patches, and riparian areas for habitat. Planting diverse crops, adjusting mowing timing and frequency, selecting forage-friendly cover crops, and strategically using field edges can benefit biodiversity, watershed health, and carbon storage.

Structurally complex (mixed height) habitat made up of diverse native trees, shrubs, and perennials increases the abundance and diversity of pollinator and bird species that in turn provide important on-farm services, such as crop pollination and pest control.

Learn More and Take Action

Scan the QR code or visit
vt.audubon.org/farming



Find native plants by zip code at
vt.audubon.org/native-plants

CREDITS

Cover photos top to bottom: honeybee and native sweat bee on common gaillardia, Evan-Barrientos/Audubon Rockies; diverse farm habitats/Intervale Center; Northern Harrier, Susan Ward/Audubon Photography Awards

Inside left figure: Cassie Wolfanger/Audubon Vermont

Inside center photo: Baltimore Oriole on willow, Shari McCollough/Audubon Photography Awards

Inside right photos clockwise from top left: American Kestrel, Sara Kross/ Sacramento State University; American Kestrel, Kimberley Caruso/Audubon Photography Awards; bird box and bee house, Gwendolyn Causer/Audubon Vermont



Bird and Bee Friendly Farming

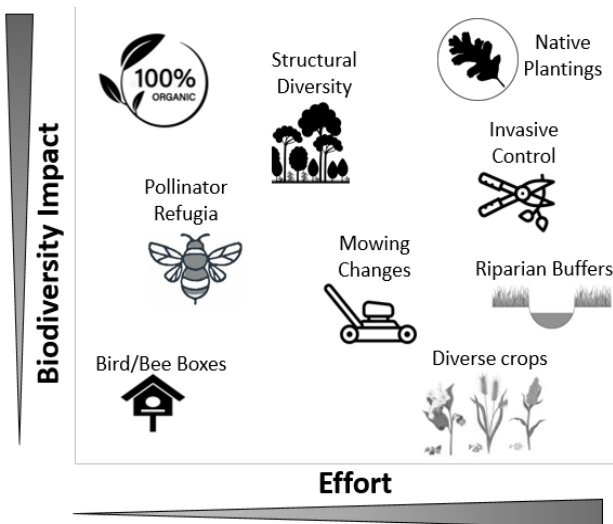


Bird & Bee Friendly Practices

Farming with birds and bees in mind can take many forms. Some practices provide greater biodiversity value. Reducing the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides and planting native trees, shrubs, and perennials are the best ways to support birds and bees.

Some practices are easy and low cost to implement, such as installing bird boxes, while others require more sustained effort, such as controlling invasive species.

Make simple changes to existing agricultural practices, such as adding pollinator-friendly seed mixes into cover crops that bloom earlier in the spring and offer more diverse floral rewards. Wait to mow hayfields until late summer after ground-nesting grassland birds have finished breeding and native plants have set their seed.



CREATE BIRD AND BEE HABITAT

Size: The larger the area, the better. Set aside at least a 30-foot-wide strips and avoid large gaps since small native bees might only travel 30- 150 feet from their nest to forage. European honey bees can fly up to 2 miles to forage.

Bloom times: Plant a variety of early, mid, and late- bloomers to ensure pollinators and birds have food through the entire growing season.

Complexity: Habitat structure created by mixed height trees and shrubs interspersed with open areas of native grasses and forbs are ideal.

Diversity: Diversity is the key to survival. Many of the pollinators that are most threatened have evolved specifically to feed on one type of native plant or a small group of plants.

NATIVE SUPERSTAR PLANTS

Some native plants host a greater number of insects, produce fatter, more nutritious berries, or have fruits or seeds that persist through the winter. Be strategic in plant selection. Here are our favorites:

Trees: oaks, black cherry, birches, maples

Shrubs: willows, speckled alder, dogwoods, serviceberry, elderberry, nannyberry, blueberry

Perennials: Joe pye, goldenrod, asters, sunflowers



WILDLIFE STRUCTURES

Build for the birds and the bees and they'll help take care of pests. Provide bird nest boxes, bee houses, raptor perches, and standing dead trees. Swallows, bluebirds, and flycatchers will eat insect pests. American Kestrel, Northern Harrier, and many hawks will prey on rodent pests.



INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL

Invasive species offer suboptimal habitat for birds and bees and provide less nutrition. Invasives outcompete and replace the native plant species birds and bees depend upon.

Remove invasive plants and control their spread over the long term. Common invaders in Vermont are Japanese honeysuckle, reed canary grass, common buckthorn, and wild parsnip. Learn about invasive ID and control at vtinvasives.org.