

St. Julian's Crossing Wildlife Habitat: Our Story



Thank you for stopping by our gardens!

Our gardens. These are pollinator-friendly, organic gardens that are a Certified Wildlife Habitat (National Wildlife Federation), Certified Butterfly Garden (North American Butterfly Association), and Monarch Waystation (Monarch Watch, Waystation No. 10925). We adopted the name “St. Julian’s Crossing Wildlife Habitat” for our gardens in honor of St. Julian the Hospitaller, the patron saint of travelers and innkeepers, because Monarch Butterflies travel through the gardens on their annual migration.

Our plants. Virtually every plant in our gardens provides food or shelter for insects, birds, lizards, etc. But our focus is on insects that pollinate: bees, butterflies, moths ... even flies, wasps, bugs, and beetles! We want to support pollinators because they face many significant challenges to their survival. And because nearly a third of our food requires pollination to grow, pollinators’ survival helps us, too!

Our pollinators. As of spring 2022, we have recorded 54 species of butterfly and at least 30 species each of bee and wasp, among the many pollinators visiting our home’s modest gardens. It’s true that if you build it, they will come!

Our educational community. Please feel free to visit our Facebook educational community: “St. Julian’s Crossing-wildlife habitat,” which is dedicated to education about pollinators, their conservation, and the native-plant gardens that attract them. Did you know, for example, that there are around 4,000 species of bee that are native to North America—and that the Honey Bee is not one of them? Or that most native bees are solitary, not forming hives like Honey Bees? Or that some bees and wasps are no bigger than a tiny fly? Don’t worry: neither did we before we began this amazing gardening adventure! Our St. Julian’s Crossing Wildlife Habitat community exists to share this kind of cool information about our amazing native pollinators.

Our methods. Gardening for pollinators isn’t hard, but it requires changing how we garden. Here’s some of what we do to make our gardens safe and supportive for pollinators:

- We don’t use pesticides: predators and parasitoids do the work for us naturally!
- We use herbicides solely when an invasive plant can’t be removed manually (which is very rare), and then in a highly targeted manner.
- We feed plants only with compost.
- We leave some bare ground for bees to dig their nests in. This is also why we don’t mulch these areas.
- We don’t mow every week because mowing scares away wildlife, removes flowers and ground cover, and pollutes. And we often use a manual mower, to minimize these adverse effects.
- We leave dead stems until spring because tiny bees may use them for nests and winter cover.
- We use fallen leaves instead of mulch in garden beds because some insects use leaves for winter cover. We also encourage the growth of native ground covers in garden beds, which act as “green mulch.”
- We favor native plants because they are better for pollinators, need less maintenance, and work better in Houston’s climate.
- We have some plants that bloom in each season, so that pollinators never go hungry.
- We choose some plants for pollen and nectar and others for leaves that feed caterpillars (host plants).

Our hope. We hope that what you see in our gardens inspires you to start your own pollinator-friendly gardens at your home! The great thing about pollinator gardening is its flexibility. It can be as simple as having just a few potted nectar plants on a patio. It can be as complex as planting many varieties of nectar and host plants to benefit multiple pollinator species. But whatever form your garden takes, and no matter its size or complexity, it can make a real difference for our diminishing pollinator populations.



RESOURCES

- St. Julian's Crossing Wildlife Habitat:
 - Facebook: St. Julian's Crossing-wildlife habitat (<https://www.facebook.com/St-Julians-Crossing-wildlife-habitat-1609337762653792/>)
 - iNaturalist: laurenjansensimpson
 - Instagram: @st_julians_crossing
 - Pinterest: St. Julian's Crossing Wildlife Habitat
 - Website: www.stjulianscrossing.com
 - Email: stjulianscrossing@gmail.com
 - Lauren Simpson's naturalist CV: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dBx721_pMNpEfHUXNQwyn9CQRZMBRPOM6g6sWvN_fXc/edit?usp=sharing
- Bird Friendly Communities (Houston Audubon Society): <http://www.birdfriendlyhouston.org/>
- Butterfly Enthusiasts of Southeast Texas (NABA chapter): <http://www.naba.org/chapters/nababest/>
- Coastal Prairie Partnership: <http://prairiepartner.org/>
- Houston Arboretum and Nature Center (Planting for Pollinators page): <http://houstonarboretum.org/2016/03/planting-for-pollinators/>
- Houston Audubon Society: <https://houstonaudubon.org/>
- Houston Native Bees: <http://www.houstonnativebees.org/>
- Houston Zoo (list of actions that save wildlife): <http://www.houstonzoo.org/saving-wildlife/take-action/>
- Katy Prairie Conservancy: <http://www.katyprairie.org/>
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center: <https://www.wildflower.org/>
- Monarch Watch: <http://www.monarchwatch.org/>
- National Wildlife Federation: <http://www.nwf.org/>
- Native Bee Allies (Houston): <https://www.facebook.com/nativebeeallies/>
- Native Plant Society of Texas: State organization (<http://npsot.org/wp/>), Houston Chapter (<https://npsot.org/wp/houston/>), Clear Lake Chapter (<https://npsot.org/wp/clearlake/>)
- Native Prairies Association of Texas: State organization (<https://texasprairie.org/>), Houston Chapter (<https://houstonprairie.org/>)
- Nature Conservancy (Texas): <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/texas/index.htm>
- Pollinator Partnership: <http://www.pollinator.org/>
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (wildlife page): <http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/>
- Texas Pollinator Powwow: <http://www.texaspollinatorpowwow.org/>
- Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation: <http://www.xerces.org>
- *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment and social justice: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

