



Planning a Pitstop on the Butterfly Highway

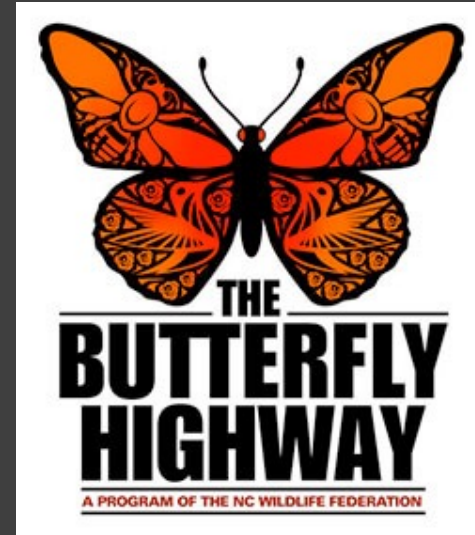
The Courtyards Wesley Chapel
July 29, 2026

Kristyna Culp, Director Habitat Builders,
NCWF Chapter in West Union County

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer,
Union County, NC

Photos are my own unless otherwise noted







HABITAT
B U I L D E R S



Habitat Builders, NC Wildlife Federation Chapter in Western Union County

- Our Mission: To educate and engage our community about the importance and benefits of restoring, protecting and conserving our wildlife and natural habitat.
- We host free conservation focused events, including:
 - Arbor Day programs at local elementary schools
 - Educational events about wildlife
 - Volunteer events including invasive plant removal, pollinator garden planting and maintenance, tree plantings
 - Nature Walks, Bird Walks, Moth Nights, Nature Scavenger Hunts

Since 2019



59 educational events



110 volunteer events



Wesley Chapel Events

Arbor Day Events at Wesley Chapel and New Town Elementary Schools

- March 2023 278 students
- March 2024 282 students
- March 2025 125 students
- March 2026 236 students



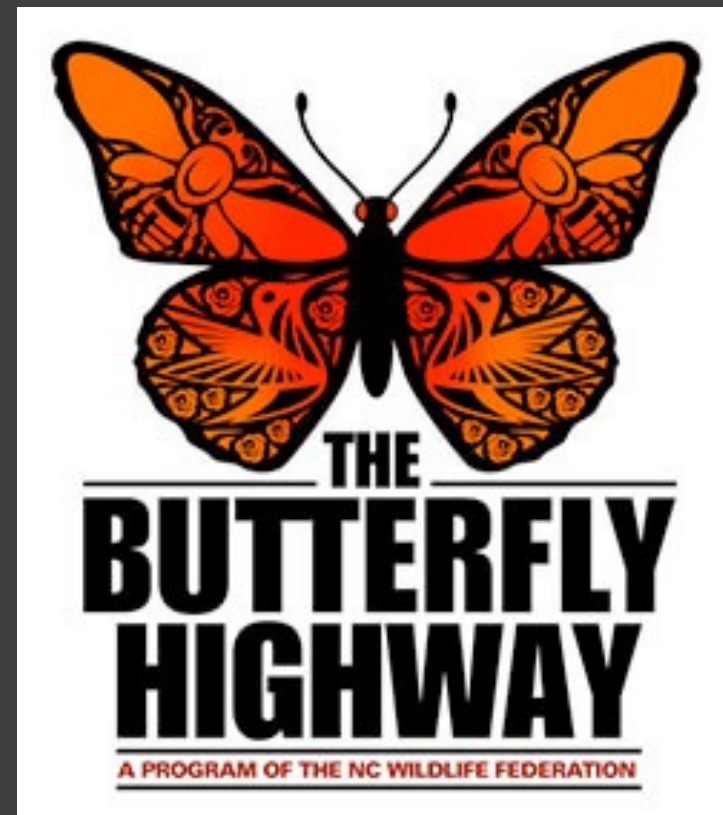
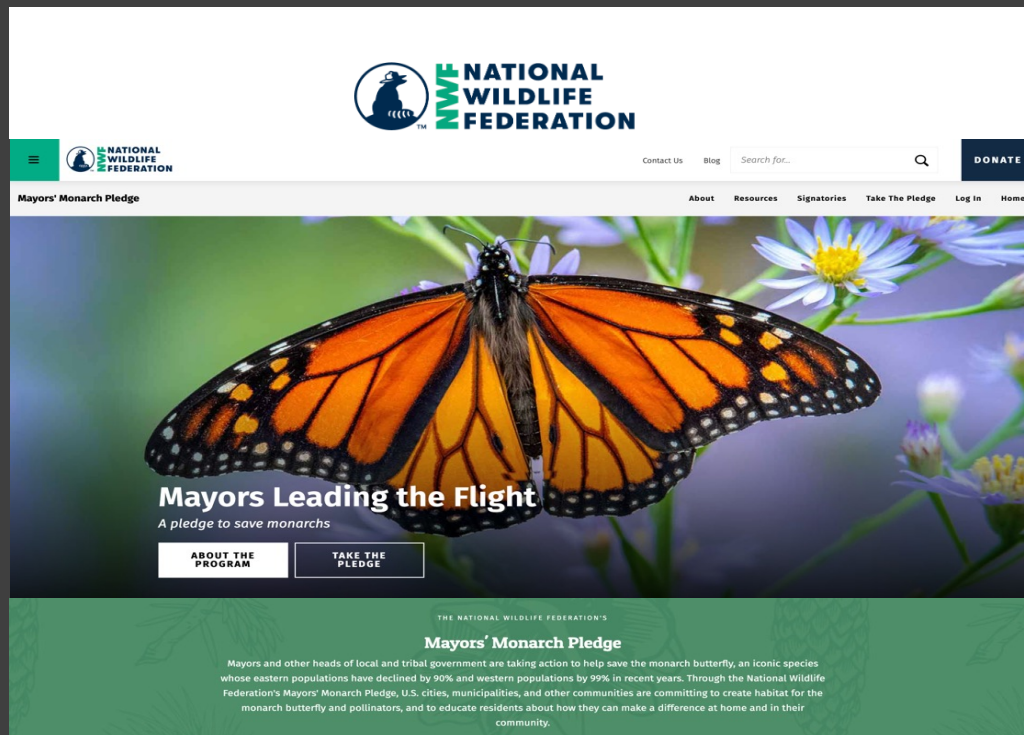
Wesley Chapel Events

- 10/7/25 National Night Out
- 10/21/25 Coyotes Educational Event with Rupert Medford, Wildlife Biologist, NC Wildlife Resource Commission



Wesley Chapel Events

7/13/26 Village Council moves forward with Butterfly Highway Certification and the Mayor's Monarch Pledge



Other Upcoming Events Around the Area

- 7/21/26 Moth Night
- 8/21, 22 Great Southeast Pollinator Census
- 9/22/26 Create a Butterfly Garden NOW, for Spring Pollinators
- October-February Invasive Plant Removal Workshops
- [Habitat Builders Calendar](#)





North Carolina Wildlife Federation: NCWF

Protecting, conserving and restoring

North Carolina wildlife and habitat since 1945. <https://ncwf.org/>



NCWF Overall Impact by the Numbers



16,332

Certified Wildlife Habitats in NC



38,303

Acres of pollinator habitat restored



122,310

Youth and their families learned about nature



300,000

Venison meals distributed to food banks and pantries



70

Osprey platforms installed along Catawba River



372,827

Pounds of litter removed



7,330

Volunteers restoring habitat



73,681

Trees and native pollinator plants planted

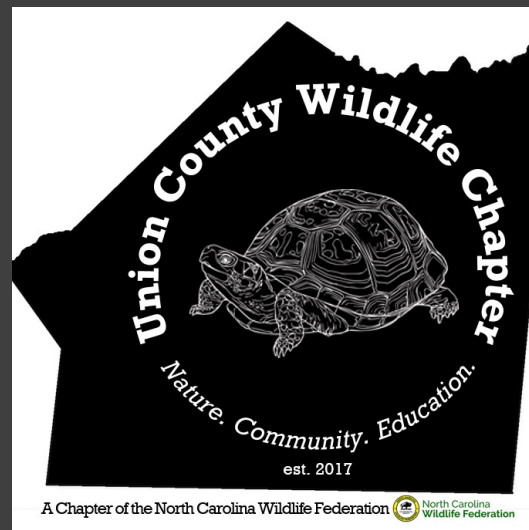
North Carolina Wildlife Federation: NCWF



- State-wide organization with 21 Chapters
 - Butterfly Highway Newsletter
 - Policy and conservation work
 - Very informative website
- Local Chapters offer workshops and educational events



West Union County



Monroe, NC



Charlotte, NC



Matthews, NC





THE
BUTTERFLY
HIGHWAY

A PROGRAM OF THE NC WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Butterfly Highway Program

- Focuses on raising awareness about pollinators
 - Most popular (IMO)
 - Most efficient (not just my opinion, research based)
 - Least known but really common (IMO)
- Insect population in decline esp. since 1970s



Pollinator Decline due to Habitat Loss

- Over-Development
- Urbanization
- Intensive agriculture
- Overuse of pesticides and herbicides
- Invasive species
- Climate change



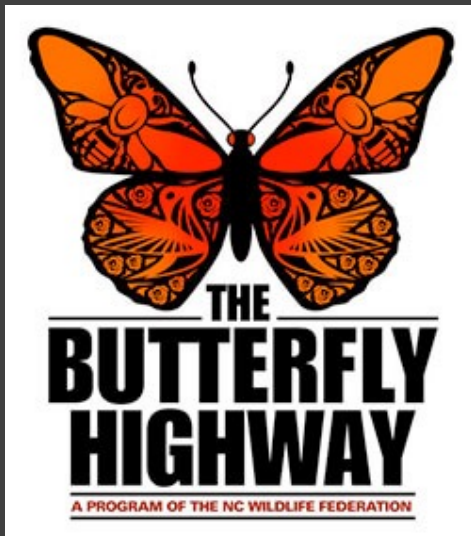
Why is this an issue?

- 90% of flowering plants require or benefit from pollination
- 33% of food crops require pollination
- Foundational food source for wildlife food web
- E. O. Wilson “If we were to wipe out insects alone on this planet, the rest of life and humanity with it would mostly disappear from the land. Within a few months.”



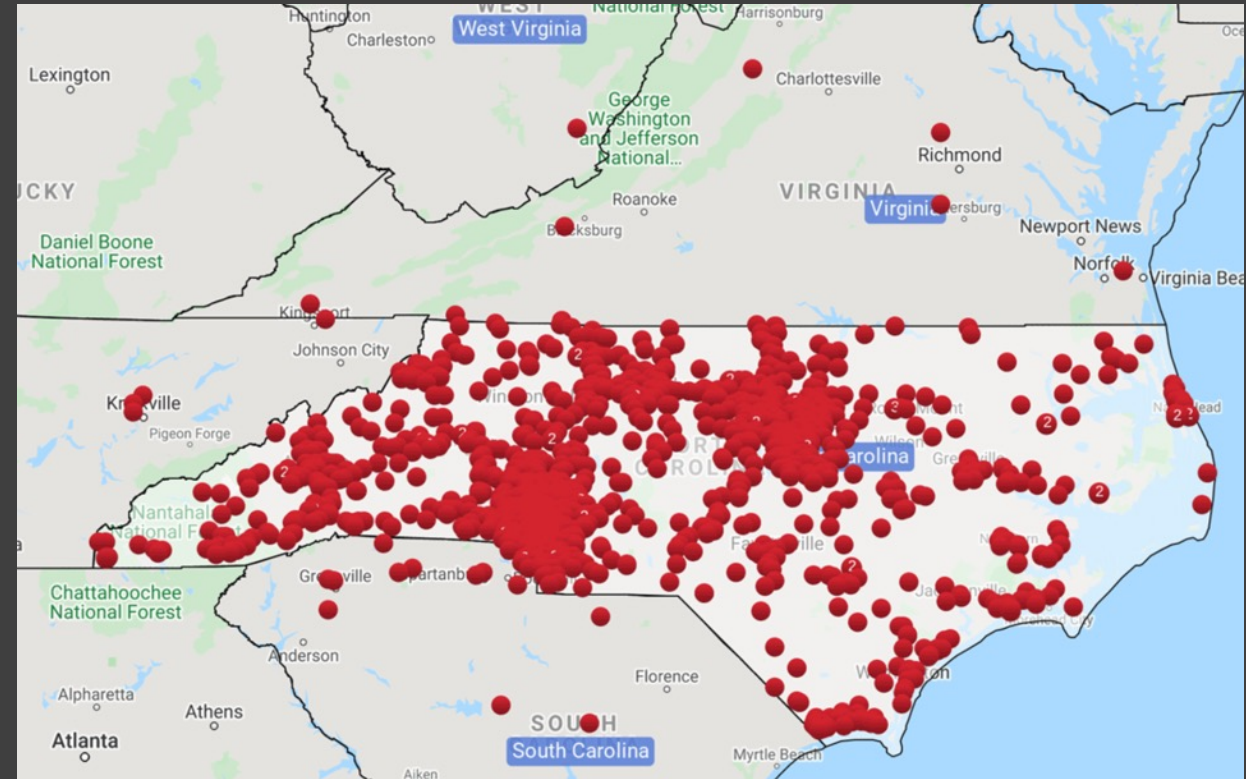
The Solution: The Butterfly Highway

- Restore native pollinator habitats throughout the state
 - Backyard landscapes
 - Agricultural field borders
 - Roadsides
 - Public Land



The Solution: The Butterfly Highway

- 5089 Pitstops registered in NC (5157 US wide)
- 30,000 Acres
- Types: Residential, Agricultural, Business, Public Parks, Container/Patio, Place of Worship
- Sizes: <1/4 Acres to >100 Acres



The Solution: Join the Butterfly Highway

- Create a Pitstop on the Butterfly Highway
- Add your garden to the map
- Buy a sign, maybe some seeds
- Sign up for the newsletter
 - Feature Article
 - Native plant Spotlight
 - Pollinator Spotlight
 - Invasive Plant Feature
 - Habitat Tip of the week
 - Upcoming Events and Resources

- [Butterfly Highway](#)

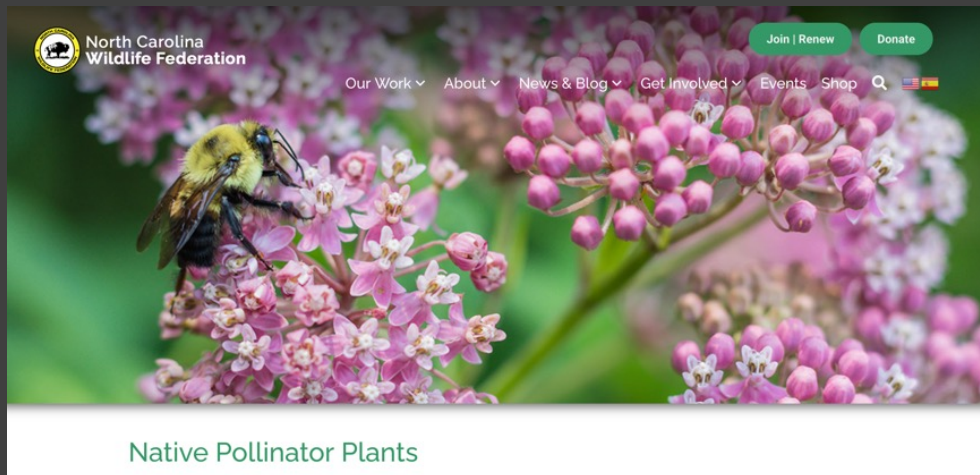


Create a Pitstop on the Butterfly Highway



How Can You Get Started?

- Simple answer? Plant some native blooming plants
- One plant can make a difference
- Plan now, plant in the Fall



- [Native Plant List from NCWF](#)



Special Considerations for Plant Purchases

- Make sure your purchases are [pollinator safe](#)
 - No neonicotinoids, very long lasting
 - No pesticides at all is best
- Pollinators like composite flowers, easy work
- Pollinators do not like double flowers, can't find the pollen!



Best Flower Types for Pollinators

- Easy access
- No doubles
- Composite flowers



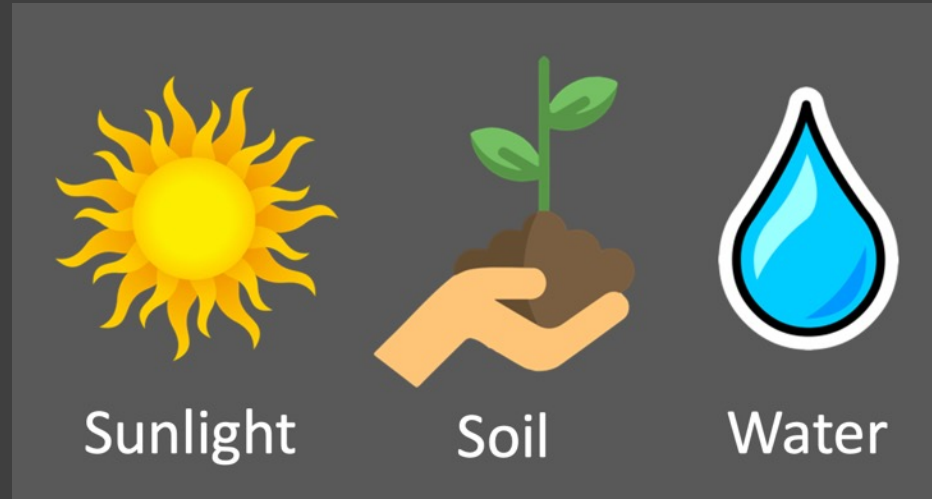
How can you BEST Support Pollinators?

- Even better: plant a diverse blend of native, blooming plants
- Maintain at least 3 different plant types blooming simultaneously from early spring to late Fall
- Diverse height, bloom shape, color, bloom time
- **And remember...a little leaf damage is a good thing!**



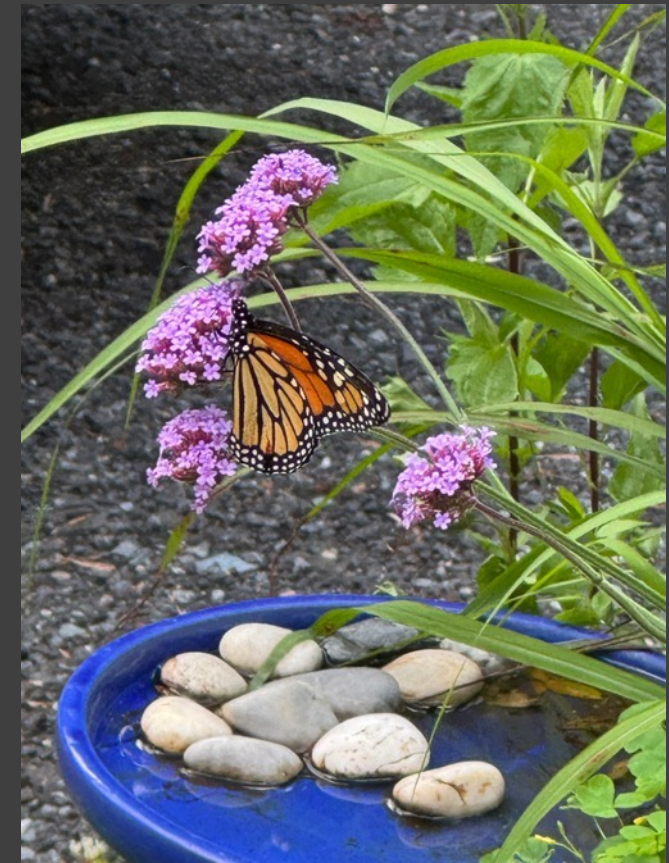
Gardening 101 PSA

- Find a garden spot
- Understand the site conditions: sun, soil, water, then pick the plants
- Think: *Right Place Right Plant*
- Most pollinator plants like sun
- Most native plants do not need fertilizer
- Most native plants are happy planted densely
- Think: Green Mulch



What Else do Pollinators Need?

- Water
- Shelter
- Protection
- Dark sky
- Food: host and nectar plants



Show Me Some Plants!!!

Easy Pollinator Support Perennials for our Area

- *Rudbeckia* spp. Black eyed Susan, Cut-leaf Coneflower
- *Solidago* spp. Goldenrod
- *Eupatorium* spp. Boneset
- *Symphyotrichum* spp. Asters
- *Echinacea* spp. Purple Coneflower
- *Eutrochium* spp. Joe-Pye Weed
- *Asclepias* spp. Milkweed
- Best plant time: October-December, but Spring ok



Easy Pollinator Support Trees for our Area

- *Liriodendron tulipifera* Tulip Poplar
- *Prunus serotina* Wild Black Cherry
- *Quercus* spp. Oak
- *Salix* spp. Willow
- *Cercis canadensis* Redbud
- *Acer* spp. Maple
- Best plant time: October-February



Easy Pollinator Support Vines for our Area

- *Passiflora incarnata*
Passionflower
- *Gelsemium sempervirens*
Carolina Jessamine
- *Lonicera sempervirens*
Coral Honeysuckle
- *Bignonia capreolata* Crossvine
- *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*
Virginia Creeper
- *Ampleaster carolinianus*
Carolina Aster
- Best plant time: October-
December, Spring ok



Easy Pollinator Support, Non-Native Heat Loving Plants for our Area

- Annuals

- *Tithonia*
- *Zinnia*
- Fill in new perennial beds
- Can direct sow seeds from April – July

- Perennials

- *Lantana* plant April-May (not Fall)
 - Some Lantana acts as an annual in NC, check the label
- *Verbena bonariensis* plant in Fall or Spring



Extending the Season Early: Feb-April

- Perennials

- *Erigeron pulchellus* Robin's Plantain
- *Viola* spp. Violet
- *Salvia lyrata* Lyreleaf Sage
- *Tradescantia* spp. Spiderwort
- *Zizia aptera*
- *Phlox subulata*
- *Columbine* spp.
- *Antennaria* spp. Pussy toes
- *Packera* spp.

- Ephemerals

- *Mertensia virginica* Virginia Bluebells
- *Claytonia virginica* Spring Beauty
- *Uvularia* spp. Bellwort



Extending the Season Early: Feb-April

- Vines

- *Gelsemium sempervirens* Carolina Jessamine
- *Lonicera sempervirens* Coral Honeysuckle
- *Bignonia capreolata* Crossvine

- Trees/Shrubs

- *Liriodendron tulipifera* Tulip Poplar
- *Prunus serotina* Wild Black Cherry
- *Quercus* spp. Oak
- *Cercis canadensis* Redbud
- *Salix* spp. Willow
- *Amelanchier* spp. Serviceberry
- *Vaccinium* spp.
- *Rhododendron* various, native Azalea
- *Viburnum* spp.

- Edgeworthia (non-native)



Extending the Season Late: August-October

- *Late Blooming Natives*

- *Rudbeckia* spp. Black eyed Susan
- *Solidago* spp. Goldenrod
- *Eupatorium* spp. Boneset
- *Symphyotrichum* spp. Asters
- *Vernonia* spp. Ironweed
- *Conoclinium coelestinum* Blue Mist Flower

- Can Stand the Heat! Zinnia, Lantana, Solidago, Boneset
- Native vs non-native



Certified Wildlife Habitat

- Go beyond pollinators
- Certify your yard and community through the National Wildlife Federation
- [Details here](#)

What are the requirements to certify my habitat?

An ideal Certified Wildlife Habitat® provides food, water, cover, and places to raise young for wildlife with a minimum goal of 70% native plants that provide multi-season bloom and are free of neonicotinoids and other pesticides or herbicides.



FOOD *Minimum of 3 Sources*

Native plants form the foundation of the food web in nature and should do the same in your landscape.



WATER *Minimum of 1 Source*

All animals need clean water to survive. Some need it for bathing and breeding as well.



COVER *Minimum of 2 Sources*

Wildlife needs places to take shelter from bad weather and places to hide from predators or hunt for prey.



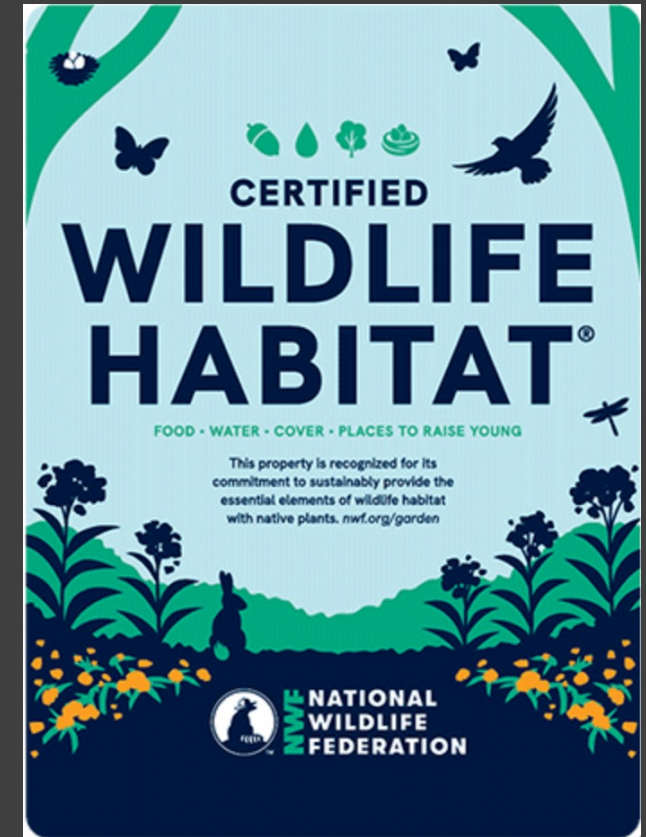
PLACES TO RAISE YOUNG *Minimum of 2 Sources*

Wildlife needs places and resources to reproduce, to protect, and to raise their young.



SUSTAINABILITY *Minimum of 3 Actions*

Maintain your landscape in ways that ensure soil, air, and water stay healthy and clean.



Big Messages

- Diversity Wins: bloom time, bloom shape, color, height
- Choose plants that have lots of close flowers
- Single best plant? *Rudbeckia hirta*, *triloba* or *fulgida* (Black-eyed Susan), easy to grow and resilient
- Bees are the #1 Pollinator
- Everyone needs water year around at various depths
- Some non-natives fill in the gaps



Nature PSAs



Cats stay indoors



Outside Lights off at 10p



Feel Bad? Go Outside

Every Pollinator Plant Matters

YOU can make a difference by planting even one



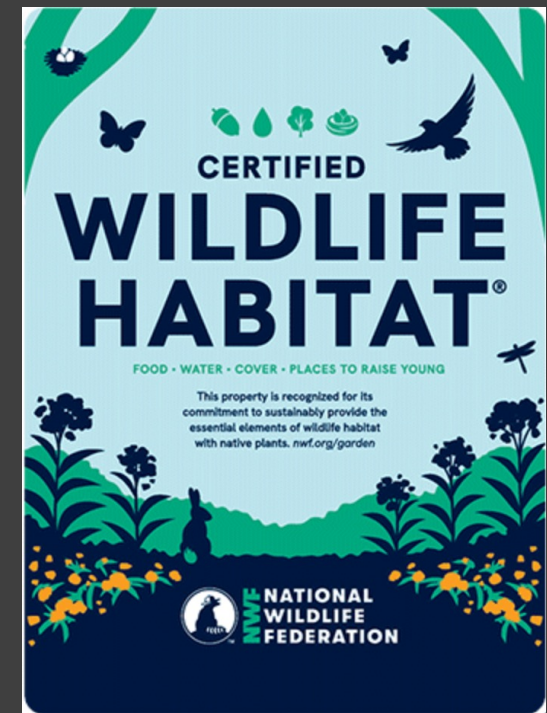
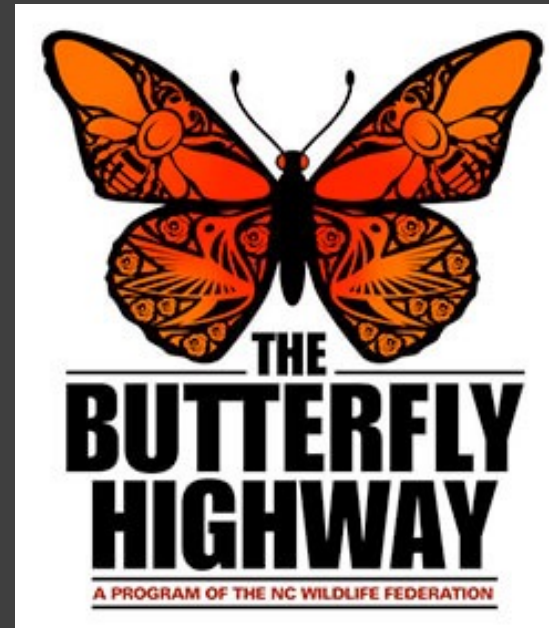
One Plant



LOTS of Plants

Organizational Resources

- [Wild Ones](#)
- [Xerces Society](#)
- [National Wildlife Federation](#)
- [NC Wildlife Federation](#)
- [Homegrown National Park](#)
- [Habitat Builders](#)
- [NC Plant Tool Box](#)
- [Union County Master Gardeners](#)
- [NC Native Plant Society](#)
- [SC Native Plant Society](#)
- [iNaturalist](#)



Plant Sources

- Local

- [Carolina Heritage Nursery](#)
- [Windcrest Farm](#)
- [Dearness Gardens Nursery & Garden Center](#)
- [Kings Garden Center](#)
- [Renfrow Hardware](#)
- [Constructive Plant Rescue](#)
- [Mellow Marsh](#) (sort of local)

- Via Mail Order

- [My Home Park](#)
- [Garden for Wildlife, NWF](#)
- [Izel Native Plants](#)
- [Joyful Butterfly](#)
- [Bring Back the Butterflies](#)

- Seeds

- [Ernst Seeds](#)
- [Roundstone Native Seed](#)
- [Everwilde Farms](#)
- [Sow True Seed](#)
- [Eden Brothers](#)



Plant Sources

- Plant Sales

- [UNCC Botanical Gardens Plant Sales](#)
- [Wing Haven Plant Sales](#)
- [Union County Extension Master Gardeners Plant Sales](#) look for Master Gardener Sales in every NC/SC county
- [CPCC Horticulture Department Plant Sales](#)
- [SCNPS Plant Sales](#)

- Nursery Lists

- [Wild Ones Nursery List](#)
- [NCNPS Nursery List](#)
- [NC Pollinator Alliance Resource List](#)
- [Xerces Native Plant and Seed Finder](#)



QUESTIONS?

Contact me at info@habitatbuilders.org
Slides posted to www.habitatbuilders.org/resources

