

## The Winter Pollinator-Friendly Garden

Awareness of the decline in insect populations—an issue thrust into the mainstream with the publication a number of years ago of the alarming New York Times Magazine article “The Insect Apocalypse”—has inspired many gardeners to revise their fall cleanup techniques in ways that aid the insect populations on which their gardens rely.



Putnam County Master Gardener Janis Butler has been an apostle of this movement and regularly gives her extremely informative talk “The Labor-Saving Magic of Not Tidying Up,” illustrated with power point images, about the many beneficial insects, including the pollinators, that need to overwinter in leaf litter and in flower stalks in the garden.

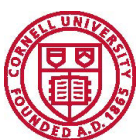
Her point is simply that gardeners should resist tidying up in order to provide habitat for insects, which will in turn improve the long-term health of the garden. Her presentations often include a "show and tell" in the garden of a



Northern Sea Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) provides birds with copious seed for winter months.  
Photo by Matthew Weigman

local leaf-saver, demonstrating how one can corral leaves with stakes and short fencing to "leave the leaves alone" for the life in the leaf litter and to aid the animals that rely on them for food.

Winter pollinator-friendly gardens must also sustain the birds that overwinter. Doug Tallamy and Rick Darke, in their 2014 book “The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden”, include



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extensive plant lists for many areas of the United States, which show the ecological value to wildlife.

From this we learn that the birds that persist in our area in winter feed on the berries of the many species of Holly (*Ilex*) and Dogwood (*Cornus*). Both goldenrod (*Solidago*) and Northern Sea Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) also provide copious seed for overwintering birds. Wise, eco-friendly gardeners will incorporate ecology into their landscape design and select attractive trees, shrubs, perennials and grasses, which sustain our pollinators.

Matthew Weigman, Master Gardener Volunteer



The fruits of many species of holly (*Ilex*) and dogwood (*Cornus*) are a rich source of food for birds that winter in our landscapes. By winter's end, this bush will be stripped of its berries.

Photo by Matthew Weigman

You'll find a lists of native plants that benefit pollinators on the [Putnam Pollinator Pathway](#) page, as well as our [Pollinator Support](#) page.