

Container gardening workshop: Supporting our pollinators!



Contents

Steps for your container garden	2
Materials for your container garden	5
Getting to know your pollinator plants	6



Steps for your container garden

1- Sow seeds in 2 inch starter containers (March - April)

- You can use all-purpose potting soil but make sure it's potting mix, not garden soil, as this will ensure the proper drainage. Ensure that your containers have drainage holes at the bottom.
- New England Aster
 - Sow them on the soil surface and gently press into the soil, and barely cover them with soil, so they are not more than 1/8 inch deep
- Victorin's Evening Primrose
 - Sow seeds on surface without covering after sowing.
 - These seeds are very small and need light to germinate.
 - Seeds can be mixed with fine sand or talcum for uniform sowing.
- Canada Reedgrass
 - Sow seeds on surface without covering after sowing.
 - These seeds are very small and need light to germinate.
 - Seeds can be mixed with fine sand or talcum for uniform sowing.
- You can use all-purpose potting soil but make sure it's potting mix, not garden soil, as this will ensure the proper drainage. Ensure that your containers have drainage holes at the bottom.
- Water your soil thoroughly, immediately after sowing the seeds
- Label popsicle sticks or plastic spoons with the type of seed and stick it in the starter containers, or label masking tape and place it around the container.
- Place the seeded containers in a location that will receive some light.

2- Germinate Canada Goldenrod seeds (March - April)

- Canada Goldenrod requires a cold treatment to germinate properly but spreads quickly once established!
- Mix the seeds with an equal volume of damp sand or wet vermiculite. Place everything in a zippered plastic bag. Leave in a cold room or in the fridge for 30 to 90 days.

3- Care for seedlings until fully sprouted and growing.


- Check the container daily during warm weather and water as needed to keep the soil moist, but never soggy.

4- Transplant seedlings into 4 inch seedling containers (April - May)

- Cut the weaker seedlings off at the base, near the soil.
- Transplant the strongest seedlings into seedling-sized containers. Ensure that your containers have drainage holes at the bottom.
- Water your soil thoroughly.

5- Harden seedlings off (April - May)

- Check the container daily and water as needed to keep the soil moist, but never soggy. As they grow, begin hardening them off to the weather by bringing them outside at nicest times of day.
- Increase time outside until they can stay overnight with no chance of low temperatures (below 10°C).



If your seedlings didn't make it-- don't worry! You can try again next year, or visit a plant nursery in May to get fully-grown seedlings to plant in your container.

6- Plant seedlings in planters and sow your Goldenrod seeds (May and June)

- When weather permits (around mid-May), transplant seedlings into a single planter, taking up $\frac{3}{4}$ of the space.
 - Scatter rocks around the drainage holes at the bottom. Fill the planter container up to 10 cm below the rim. Dig one hole per seedling, as deep as the height of the seedling container.
 - For plastic containers: Unpot the seedling by turning it upside-down while holding your hand over the top of the soil; gently squeeze the container until the soil and roots slide loose; massage gently to loosen the roots. Place the plant in the hole, fill any gaps with soil, and press down firmly around the stem of the plan.
 - For peat moss containers: Place peat pot in the hole and make sure the c=pot is completely covered by soil.
 - Water slowly and thoroughly, until water comes out the bottom of your planter.
- Sow your germinated Canada Goldenrod seeds in the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ of the space, at a depth of $\frac{1}{16}$ inch (beginning to mid-June).
- Leave in a spot that gets partial sun. Now they have their forever-home!

7- Care for plants (May - September)

- Watering: During the 4–6 weeks after planting, water plants once every 3–4 days if the soil is dry. Otherwise, water your plants thoroughly if you see signs of wilting (limp leaves or stems) or browning leaves, or about once a week if they aren't getting rained on.
- Weeding: New plants may show up in your container. These could be weeds, or they could be baby native plants! If you're not sure, take a photo and ask an expert before deciding whether to remove it.

8- Prepare your container garden for the winter (October)

- Scatter seeds: Leave your plants to dry out and drop their seeds, or spread seeds from a seed pack in a thin, even layer over the soil surface.
- Mulch: Gather dried leaves, stems, small twigs and seed heads; scatter them to form a 5-10 cm thick layer at the base of your plants. This provides protective insulation in the winter and early spring.
- Protect: Bring your containers into an unheated building (like a garage, garden shed, or cellar) or cover them with a tarp. You can stuff the tarp with dry leaves to add even more insulation.

9- Greet them again in the spring (April - May)

- Perennials: Most native plants (including the ones that we handed out in our seed giveaway) are perennials. This means that instead of dying each year, their roots survive the winter if properly protected and they will come back in the spring!
- Move outdoors: If you moved your plant into an unheated building for the winter, you can move them outside for increasing periods of time in April, leaving them outside overnight when the weather is favorable (no chance of dropping below 10°C at night).
- Fertilize: Spread a few handfuls of organic solid fertilizer on top of the soil. Gently mix it in using a small garden trowel or similar.
- Say hello to newcomers: If your plants scattered their seeds in the fall, new plants will begin to grow in your container in the spring time.

Materials for your container garden

These are the materials you need for ONE container with four different species.

Must-have:

- All-purpose potting soil (~ 10-15 L). Make sure that it's potting mix and not garden soil!
- 4 or more seed starting containers, with drainage holes (~2 inches in diameter)
- 4 or more seedling containers, with drainage holes (~4 inches in diameter)
- 1 large planter, with drainage hole (~14 inches in diameter)
- Species of seeds native to the mixed wood plain of Montreal (See p.9)
- Enough outdoor space for one large planter (~ 14 x 14")

Good to have:

- Marker and popsicle sticks / plastic spoons or masking tape for labelling your seeds
- Sand and a plastic baggie, for any seeds that require cold germination in the fridge
- Rocks, for covering your planter's drainage holes
- Mulch materials, for insulating your container plants in the fall
- Organic solid fertilizer, for fertilizing your plants in the spring

Getting to know your pollinator plants

The seeds we distributed for this workshop were purchased from Aiglo Indigo. The seeds come from ethical harvests and reliable suppliers with nature conservation at heart.



New England Aster

Flowering season:
July – October

Height: 0.5 - 1 meter

Pollinators: Bees,
butterflies, flies

The New England aster is
the most colorful and
flowering of all North
American asters.



Victorin`s Evening Primrose

Flowering season:
July – September

Height: 0.65 – 1.25
meters

Pollinators: Nocturnal
moths

The flowers on this open
at the end of the day
and stay open all night.
This makes it an
important plant for
some moths.



Canada Reed-grass

Flowering season:

July – August

Height: 1.25 - 1.5 meters

Pollinators: It provides habitat for overwintering eggs, caterpillars and pupae of butterflies.

It is an exceptionally strong ornamental grass. It prefers cool soils, but tolerates many soil types. Its golden ears take on a most elegant pink color over the course of the summer.



Canada Goldenrod

Flowering season:

July – September

Height: 0.6 - 1.5 meters

Pollinators: Butterflies, bees

Goldenrod has medicinal qualities and is the delight of beneficial insects and butterflies in the heart of the most beautiful days of summer.