

St. Julian's Crossing: 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” 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, 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 summer 2017, we have observed around 39 species of butterfly, close to 30 species of bee, and over 25 species of wasp in our home’s modest gardens.

Our educational community. Please feel free to visit our Facebook educational community: “St. Julian’s Crossing-wildlife habitat,” which is dedicated to education and news about pollinators, the gardens that attract them, and their conservation. Did you know, for example, that there are around 1,100 species of bees that are native to Texas (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 Facebook 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 or herbicides.
- We feed plants with compost and organic fertilizers.
- 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.
- We leave dead stems until spring because tiny bees may use them for nests and winter cover.
- We leave leaf litter in the beds instead of mulch because some insects use it for winter cover.
- 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
 - Visit our Facebook educational community, St. Julian's Crossing-wildlife habitat: <https://www.facebook.com/St-Julians-Crossing-wildlife-habitat-1609337762653792/>
 - Follow our catalog of garden wildlife on iNaturalist: laurenjanssimpson
- 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 Native Bees: <http://www.houstonnativebees.org/>
- Houston Zoo (list of actions that save wildlife): <http://www.houstonzoo.org/saving-wildlife/take-action/>
- Houston Arboretum and Nature Center (Planting for Pollinators page): <http://houstonarboretum.org/2016/03/planting-for-pollinators/>
- 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: <http://npsot.org/wp/>
- 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: <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

