

# WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH "NO MOW MAY?"



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

## WHAT IS "NO MOW MAY?"

The goal of "No Mow May" is to pause mowing lawns during May to allow flowering plants to help provide food for pollinators. Early spring is a time where floral resources are often limited for pollinators, *especially in urban and suburban landscapes.*

## Tips for participating in "No Mow May"

Check your local ordinances. There might be restrictions on grass height and other local restrictions that apply to yard care.

Reduce or eliminate chemical pesticides from your yard.

After May, make a smooth transition for your lawn to minimize stress to your mower and turf:

- Make sure your mower's blades are sharp.
- If using a gas-powered mower, plan on using more gasoline.
- Raise your mower as high as it can go. It will likely take several mows to get your lawn back to a desired height.
- If you have a lot of lawn clippings, spread them out, rake them up or use them in your compost so they don't smother the underlying lawn.
- For the remainder of the season, mow when needed. Keeping your lawn at 3-4" is good for overall turf health.

## Do pollinators benefit from my unmowed lawn in May?

It depends! Lawns that consist solely of turfgrass provide little to no resources for pollinators. Lawns that also contain low-growing flowering plants can serve as a food source for pollinators in early spring. Research shows that lawns that are mowed less often promotes more flowers. Also, lawns that use less herbicides tend to have more flowering plants, which could support a greater diversity of pollinators and other insects.

## POLLINATORS NEED...



Blooming flowers to feed on all season long.



Safe places to nest, overwinter and hide.



Protection from pesticides.







## Options to help your lawn and yard be more pollinator friendly year round

- Assess your landscape for the quality and quantity of pollinator habitat you have available. The Wisconsin Online Pollinator Habitat Assessment tool can help!
- Mow less often. Lawns that are mowed less often promote more flowers because the flowers aren't being mowed off.
- Add low-growing flowering plants to your lawn to provide nectar and pollen to a wide range of pollinators throughout the season. Dutch white clover, self-heal and creeping thyme are good choices.
- Reduce the size of your lawn or transform part of it to a "bee lawn." The University of Minnesota bee lawns website can help!
- Plant pollinator-friendly trees, shrubs and flowers.
- Leave places for pollinators to nest, overwinter and hide, such as leaves, undisturbed ground, brush piles, etc.
- Reduce or eliminate pesticide applications to your lawn and yard. Before applying chemical treatments, properly identify or diagnose the problem or issue.
- After your plant problem has been identified, learn your options and try non-chemical methods first.
- If chemical options are warranted, use pesticides responsibly. Check the label for any potential hazards to pollinators. Choose the least toxic, least persistent option. Follow the label for all preparation, application, storage, disposal and safety information.



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## READ THE LABEL!

Pesticides can impact food sources for pollinators and cause them direct harm.

Check the label for the *bee icon* to signal the pesticide's potential hazard to pollinators.

## Resources

UW-Madison Division of Extension Horticulture  
[hort.extension.wisc.edu](http://hort.extension.wisc.edu)

Ask Your Gardening Question  
[go.wisc.edu/PlantQ](http://go.wisc.edu/PlantQ)

Extension Horticulture Pollinator Resources  
[hort.extension.wisc.edu/pollinators](http://hort.extension.wisc.edu/pollinators)

Wisconsin Online Pollinator Habitat Assessment Tool  
[pollinators.wisc.edu/habitat](http://pollinators.wisc.edu/habitat)

Lawn Maintenance  
[hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/lawn-maintenance](http://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/lawn-maintenance)

Bee Lawns (University of Minnesota)  
[extension.umn.edu/landscape-design/planting-and-maintaining-bee-lawn](http://extension.umn.edu/landscape-design/planting-and-maintaining-bee-lawn)

National Pesticide Information Center  
[npic.orst.edu](http://npic.orst.edu)

Bee City USA -Summaries Of Published Studies Of Conservation Benefits Of Reduced Mowing  
[beecityusa.org/reduced-mowing-studies](http://beecityusa.org/reduced-mowing-studies)

