

SPRING CLEAN-UP FOR YOUR GARDEN

As snow banks melt and the days are warmer, many of us are eager to get outside and kick off a new gardening season with a spring clean-up of the yard. Hard as it may be to resist the urge to head into your garden beds and borders to tidy up, there are good reasons to **BE PATIENT**, especially if you wish to support pollinators and other wildlife.

JUST WAIT!

Depending on the weather, wait until late April/early May to allow time for pollinators that have overwintered in your garden to emerge before raking up leaves and other plant material or cutting down stems.

After several consecutive days with temperatures of **10-15 °C**, most pollinators will have left their overwintering sites.

By waiting for warmer and drier weather, you will also avoid trampling and compacting wet soil.

KEEP the STEMS

Leave, for as long as possible, standing stems that still hold seed heads from last season. These will continue to feed seed-eating birds during the spring.

When you cut down perennial stems, leave 8-10 inches standing to serve as nest sites for cavity-nesting bees and other insects. This dead material will soon be hidden by emerging new growth.



LEAVE the LEAVES

Add valuable organic matter to the soil by leaving leaf litter and chopped up perennial stems on your beds.

In less visible corners of the yard, leave piles of brush/perennial stems/leaves as nesting sites for various insects, amphibians and small mammals.



FILL the GAPS

Identify gaps in your plantings which could be filled with a plant that will extend the season of blooms for pollinators.

Remember that some perennials (such as Swamp and Butterfly Milkweeds) do not emerge until later in the season and can be damaged or mistakenly dug up during early season weeding or planting.