



**Lyon County - O'Brien County - Osceola County - Sioux County**

# CLIPPINGS

*A Weekly Column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach*

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Garden for Wildlife Month**

*Pat Kusters, Iowa Master Gardener*

May celebrates something for everyone. For instance May 3 is Hug Your Cat Day, May 6 is National Nurses Day, May 13 is Frog Jumping Day, May 14 is Dance Like a Chicken Day and so on. The whole month of May is designated as Older Americans Month, perhaps because "May" comes from the Latin word *maiores* which means "elders." May is also Chocolate Custard Month, National Smile Month, Loaded Potato Month, Better Sleep Month (I can support that), and Zombie Awareness Month. Zombie Awareness Month? Like I said, there seems to be something for everyone in May.

And for those of us who love to garden, the National Wildlife Federation has designated May as Garden for Wildlife Month. This is the perfect time of year to create or expand your garden to be more wildlife friendly. Animals are awakening from hibernation and babies are being born; birds and Monarch butterflies are returning from wintering elsewhere; perennial plants are emerging from warming soil; and trees and shrubs are in full bloom.

Fortunately, in these times of ever-shrinking wildlife areas, there seems to be a movement to take back our native plant landscape for wildlife habitats. According to a survey by the American Society of Landscape Architects, trends for residential landscaping in 2016 include using native plants or adapted drought tolerant plants to reduce water usage, be low maintenance and increase environmental sustainability.

The National Wildlife Federation is encouraging gardeners to make their gardens more welcoming to local wildlife by providing food, water and shelter essential for their survival. The goal is to grow more native plants or plants adapted to local conditions and limit the use of chemicals. Advantages include having a beautiful garden with more pollinators and fewer disease and pest problems.

Here are some of their suggestions for what you can do to make your garden more wildlife friendly:

- Try to recreate the plant ecosystem native to your area.
- Plant a variety of native plants to offer year-round food in the form of seeds, nuts, berries and nectar.
- Plant native trees to provide shelter and food for nesting birds.
- Attract butterflies and other pollinators by planting colorful nectar flowers.
- Plant milkweed for Monarch butterfly caterpillars.
- Do not use insecticides; insects are a primary source of food for many birds and some small animals.
- Do not use chemical weed killers; they may be harmful to wildlife.

In addition, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach publication "[Gardening for Butterflies and Pollinators](#)" discusses ways to make your garden more attractive to wildlife. Publication RG 0601 is available online at the Extension Store.

But the number one thing to do to attract wildlife to your garden this summer is simply to plant the things they love. Garden for Wildlife in the Month of May...

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