



## Cold Moon Farm Fact Sheet: Creating Horse-Farm Friendly Pollinator Habitat

Horse farms play an increasingly vital role in conserving open space, particularly in suburban communities. Many important animal and plant species rely on the habitat, feeding and watering opportunities offered by equestrian properties. Pollinators are one category of animal species which can particularly benefit from consideration in horse farm management.

With careful planning, it is possible to both boost the presence and activity of pollinators on your equestrian property, while also meeting the needs of its equine residents and their humans.

**Pollinators** include certain **insect, bird, and bat species** which play a vital role in plant reproduction. According to the National Park Service, pollinators are responsible for fertilizing at least 75% of flowering plants on the planet!



Attracting pollinators such as this monarch butterfly requires meeting their needs for *shelter, food, and water*.



*Figure 1: Landscaped areas can still maintain aesthetic beauty while allowing resources for pollinators by utilizing native plants.*



### **Action: Introduce Native Plants to Landscaped Areas**

Planting species native to your region in gardens and landscaped areas naturally attracts local pollinators. These plants have the additional advantage of typically being fairly easy to grow and maintain, as they are well-suited to your specific climate and growing conditions. You can learn what grows well in your region by hiring a landscape designer familiar with native species, working with your local county extension or Natural Resources Conservation agent (these resources are usually free), or type your zip code in the National Wildlife Federation's Native Plant Finder.

## Action: Allow the “Re-Wilding” of Transition Zones

On any farm, there are “transition zones,” spaces which are not frequently or ever used by horses, and which don’t serve other significant purposes. These areas include alongside driveways and access roads, around equipment and storage sheds, spaces between a trail and a fence, fenced off corners, steep terrain not used for other purposes, and along drainage ditches, ponds, and water ways. Instead of heavily maintaining these areas through intensive mowing, trimming, or weed-whipping, consider allowing them to “go wild.” Doing so may challenge the popular aesthetic, but can allow shelter, feeding, and watering opportunities for pollinators—and cuts down on the use of fossil fuels for maintenance purposes.



Figure 2: In this transition zone at Cold Moon Farm, dandelions are in full bloom, providing early-season food for pollinators like honey bees.

***Doing something small is better than doing nothing at all. Choose one aspect of “pollinator-promotion,” and allow your efforts to expand from there.***



Figure 3: Delaying early spring mowing at Cold Moon Farm results in a lawn of pollinator-supporting wildflowers. A supplemental hummingbird feeder also attracts this pollinator.

## Action: Practice “Mindful Mowing”

“Mindful Mowing” represents a change in mindset around the frequency, timing, and intensity of mowing practices on your farm. It also requires tolerating a greater diversity of plant species in fields and on lawns.

The most appropriate mindful mowing practices to employ on your property will be regionally specific. Consider setting the mowing deck higher, or extending the time between mows. In areas not being grazed, consider letting fields grow to a later stage of maturity, or rotate the sections of each field being cut to leave plants at different life stages.

One important key here is to keep an eye out for toxic plants in areas where horses graze—these may need to be manually removed.

Prepared by Christina Keim, M.Ed., M.F.A., owner and founder of Cold Moon Farm, a working horse farm dedicated to promoting the principles of sustainable living, conservation, and the highest standards of compassionate horsemanship. Learn more at [www.coldmoonfarm.org](http://www.coldmoonfarm.org).

Many pollinator-friendly management practices require a change in mindset. Explain what you are doing and why to clients, friends, and family. Wild and diverse ≠ unkempt!