

INTRODUCTION

Welcome nature to your yard!



“Nature is not a place to visit. It's home.”



Gary Snyder
Pulitzer Prize-winning poet

Dragonflies depend upon access to clean water and functioning wetland habitats for their survival.

We invite you to work alongside us as we implement the following urgent actions to restore ecologically functioning wildlife habitats to our yards and other living spaces:

- Action 1: Turn off the lights**
- Action 2: Protect your wildlife habitat**
- Action 3: Shrink the lawn**
- Action 4: Remove invasive plants**
- Action 5: Identify your keystone plants**
- Action 6: Choose plants for specialist pollinators**
- Action 7: Preserve and create pupation and nesting sites**
- Action 8: Include water and protect the watershed**
- Action 9: Design a layered landscape filled with plants**
- Action 10: Propagate or procure lots of keystone plants**
- Action 11: Plant your landscape generously**
- Action 12: Use nontoxic home and yard products**
- Action 13: Manage your wildlife habitat**
- Action 14: Build acceptance for nature's natural look**
- Action 15: Share, educate, and get involved**

Whether you are brand new to the idea of restoring a wildlife ecosystem to your yard or a veteran wildlife gardener, we are thrilled to have you join us on this critical mission!



How this action guide came to be



"The disappearance of natural habitat is the primary cause of biological diversity loss at every level—ecosystems, species and genes, all of them. Only by the preservation of much more natural habitat than previously envisioned can extinction be brought close to a sustainable level."



Edward O. Wilson, "The Global Solution to Extinction," *New York Times*, March 12, 2016

This action guide is inspired by Doug Tallamy's grassroots call-to-action in his bestselling books *Bringing Nature Home* and *Nature's Best Hope*. Doug tirelessly echoes E.O. Wilson's urgent message for all of us to do what it will take to bring back the habitat required for the survival of the "little creatures who run the world."



Doug's books will transform the way you think about your landscape and nature!

Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants (Updated and Expanded), Timber Press, 2009

Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard, Timber Press, 2020

Nature's Best Hope (Young Readers' Edition): *How You Can Save the World in Your Own Yard*, Adapted by Sarah L. Thomson, Timber Press, 2023

Helping our landscapes to provide essential ecological services

To sustain life on earth, our landscapes must provide essential ecological services. The actions in this guide will help our landscapes provide these services in the following specific ways:

Support wildlife food webs

- Planting dense layers of native plants, especially keystone plants, to provide food, shelter, and reproduction sites for wildlife
- Shrinking the lawn to make space for native plantings and to minimize the habitat disruption and destruction caused by mowing and edging
- Removing invasive plants that outcompete native plants and introduced plants that take up critical space
- Protecting wildlife by turning off lights, marking glass to prevent bird strikes, and avoiding toxins that kill wildlife or interfere with their reproduction
- Allowing native plants to set seed to increase biodiversity and provide food for wildlife
- Protecting pupation and nesting sites

- Replacing lawn with dense layers of plants, along with rain gardens where needed, to help keep water on the property
- Avoiding the use of fertilizer and using nontoxic pest and weed control methods to prevent toxins from entering the watershed
- Reducing mowing to reduce the volume of exhaust particles infiltrating the watershed
- Properly disposing of home and garden chemicals, pet poop, and other toxins to prevent contamination of the watershed
- Mulching new plantings with homegrown materials to conserve water
- Changing water habits to reduce water usage

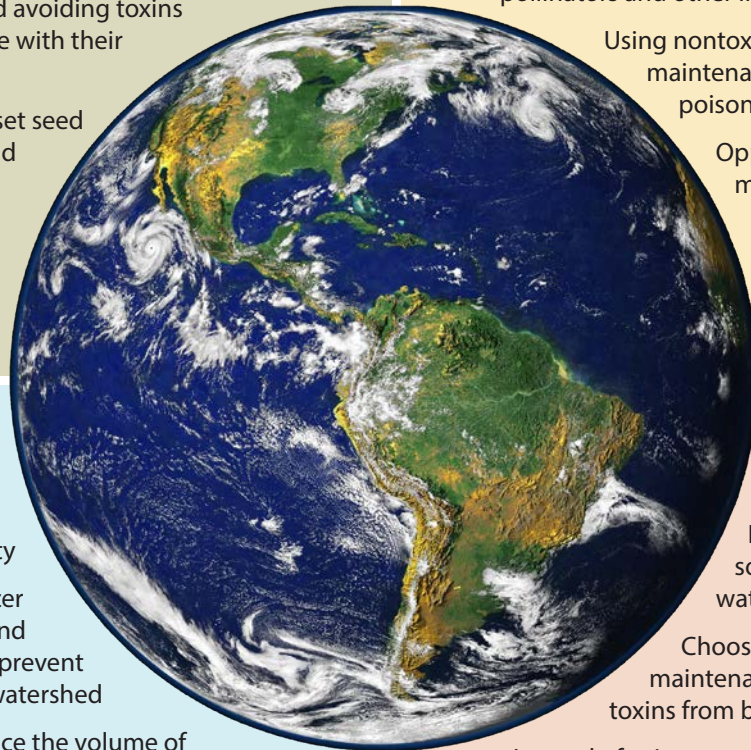
Protect and manage the watershed

Support pollinators

- Planting for a sequence of blooms that covers the entire growing season
- Planting the specific host plants needed by specialist bees, wasps, caterpillars, and other specialists
- Leaving hollow and pithy stems and woody canes to provide nesting sites for stem-nesting native bees
- Leaving areas of bare ground for ground-nesting bees
- Monitoring blooms and pausing mowing to allow pollinators and other insects to feed
- Using nontoxic lawn and yard maintenance methods that don't poison our pollinators
- Opposing community-wide mosquito spraying
- Not purchasing plants treated with neonicotinoids and other pesticides

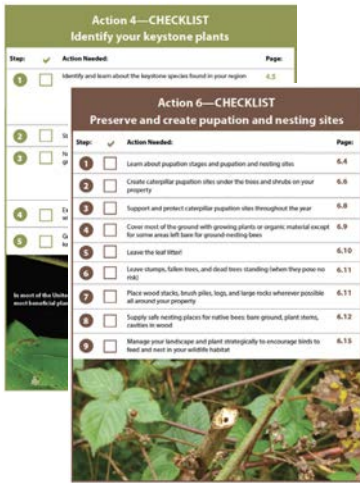
- Leaving stumps, snags, and branches on site to store carbon
- Leaving leaf litter to retain soil moisture and reduce water runoff
- Choosing nontoxic lawn and yard maintenance methods to prevent toxins from building up in the soil
- Instead of using power leaf blowers, leaving leaf litter to reduce the volume of emissions
- Reducing energy usage and carbon emissions by reducing mowing and turning off the lights
- Planting dense layers of plants to build and protect soil structure and prevent erosion
- Filling the landscape from ground to sky with native plants that sequester carbon
- Sequestering carbon by planting trees—lots of trees!

Build soil and sequester carbon



How to use this action guide

This action guide has been designed to provide accessible do-it-yourself strategies to encourage wildlife habitat and ecosystem restoration in your yard.



Each action step in this guide includes clear **step-by-step checklists** that include page numbers that refer to the **illustrated guide** giving information about each step. Throughout each step, **useful resources** are recommended for further study and regional adaptations.

| Step: | Action Needed: | Page: |
|-------|--|-------|
| 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Learn about pupation stages and pupation and nesting sites | 6.4 |
| 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Create caterpillar pupation sites under the trees and shrubs on your property | 6.6 |

Our goal is to make it easy and enjoyable to transition from an ornamental landscape to a rich, multi-purpose, nature-filled landscape. We take an **environmentally friendly, zero-waste approach** and share **cost-conscious tips** using readily available materials for those on a tight budget. We are excited to have you join us on this worthwhile journey!



In this action guide, we use the words **"your yard"** or **"your property"** to refer to **whatever space you are able to plant** whether it's large or small, your own, your workplace, a community site, or containers on an apartment balcony. We encourage you to take action in every space possible from corporate landscapes and infrastructure borders to schoolyards and senior living communities.

Throughout this action guide we recommend **powerful online tools** and **explain how to use them** (see the sample step shown here). The dedicated teams developing these tools are constantly making improvements and adding features to their websites or apps. The navigation of these tools may have recently changed, but the sites are all user-friendly. In lieu of simply providing lists of URLs, our intent is to give a tantalizing sample of the immense wealth of information that is available on these sites.

Scroll down and click **Find Pollinator Conservation Resources**.

Click on your region of the map.

Note the regional resources for habitat assessment, habitat installation, **plant lists**, habitat management, pesticide protection, identification and monitoring resources, native seed and plant vendors, and further reading.

Scroll down for regional resources.

For example, The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation provides regional habitat assessment, installation, and management guides along with plant lists, pesticide protection, and much more through their **Pollination Conservation Resources** program.

Websites are everchanging! If you have trouble finding any of the resources suggested in this guide, try searching online for **name of the website:title of the materials**. Be sure to include the colon between the two search phrases, for example **xerces society:pollinator conservation resources**. Typically, this will take you straight to the resource even when the navigation path has changed.

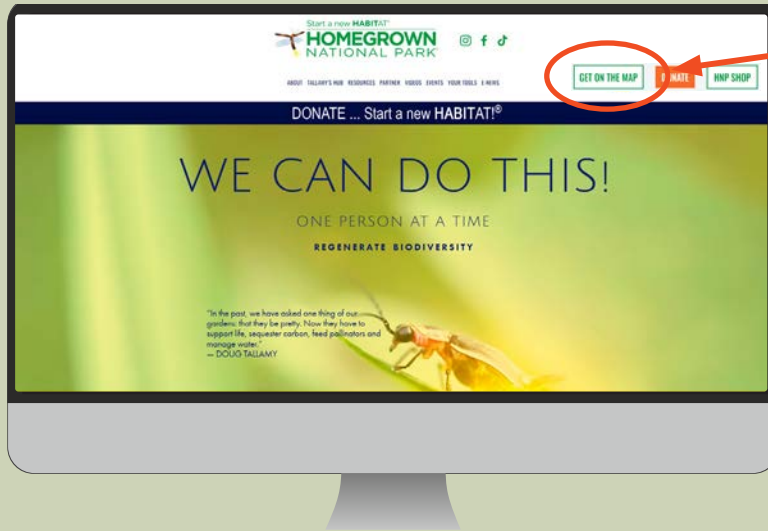


Join *Homegrown National Park*® and "Get on the Map"!

Homegrown National Park® is a call-to-action for every one of us to take the actions needed to support biodiversity and restore our local ecosystems by removing invasive plants and planting native plants. This action guide will help you do exactly this!

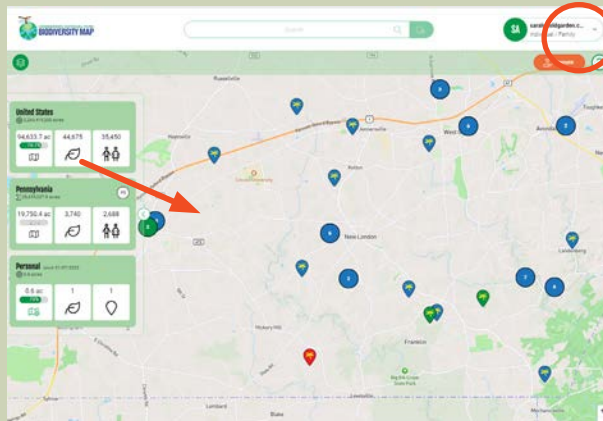
Visit: homegrownnationalpark.org

or search online for **homegrown national park** and navigate to the site.

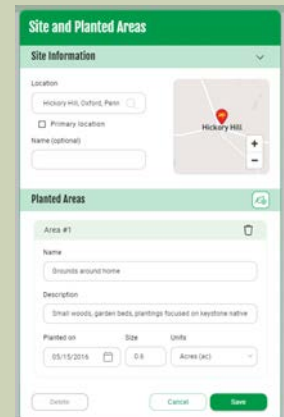
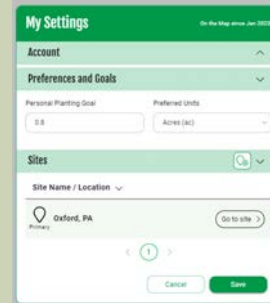


Click **GET ON THE MAP** to view the land area with reported native plantings.

Sign up to get on the map!



Click the down arrow to go to **My Settings**.



Here, you can enter your planting goals and record your progress on one or more properties. Your firefly marker will pop up on the map along with those of other community members who are supporting biodiversity where you live.



Return to the **Homegrown National Park**® home page for a bounty of resources including a link to watch a talk by Doug Tallamy, *What's the Rush?*, that will get you wanting to start planting right now!

We'll visit the *Homegrown National Park*® website in later actions. In the meantime, explore the website for a preview of the helpful tools and resources offered.

Getting started—it's worth it!



“Every oak started out as a couple of nuts who stood their ground.”



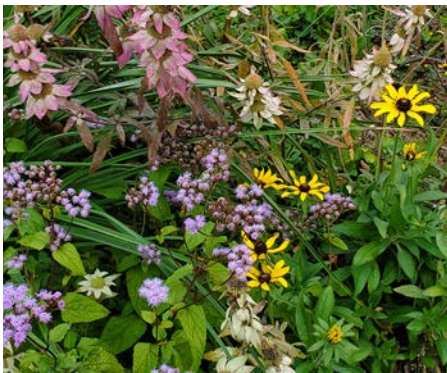
Henry David Thoreau

Converting a huge expanse of lawn bereft of trees into a wildlife habitat may simply look like an impossible task. But here's the thing, once you get started transitioning an area to wildlife, Mother Nature steps in and helps you! A tiny speck of a seed produces a mound of blooms covered with pollinators, a jay plants an oak for you, a bare spot in the soil becomes home to native ground-nesting (non-stinging) bees. Time passes, and before you know it, there are more flowers, trees have tripled or quadrupled in height, and the landscape is filled with movement and birdsong. This really does happen!

BEFORE: This extensive lawn offered no benefits to wildlife.

BEFORE: A watershed area was covered in non-native vegetation.

BEFORE: A large expanse of front lawn was an ecological dead space.



8 months LATER: In late fall, an area of this lawn was blocked with cardboard and wood chips, then planted in spring. Pollinators (and people) enjoyed a lovely display of blooms all summer.

2 years LATER: A mix of non-native weedy growth was replaced with Joe-Pye weed (*Eutrochium*) and cup plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*). This small valley now teems with life.

5 years LATER: Once planted, the oak grew exponentially each year. All it took was digging a hole, protecting the seedling from deer, and faith that one day it would be a tree—and now it is!

Taking action at a level that is appropriate for you



In *The Field Guide to Wildlife Habitats of the Western United States*, Janine M. Banyus provides a rich description of habitat being the place that provides animals with what they need for survival—food, water, shelter, and safe places to carry out their life activities, especially reproduction. In short, she says, habitat is an animal's home and sanctuary.



Janine M. Banyus, *The Field Guide to Wildlife Habitats of the Western United States*, Fireside, 1989, p. 18

Leaving seedheads of flowering plants provides food for birds such as the American goldfinch shown here.

Some of the actions urgently needed to support wildlife can be tough. The decision to remove a favorite tree or plant can be emotionally challenging. For example, you may discover that a treasured friend gave you is invasive, you may be accustomed to lighting up your home and landscape at night, or you may have a broad expanse of lawn that is the pride of the neighborhood. We need to take the difficult actions for nature to survive. As your wildlife habitat starts coming alive, you'll likely find that the hard decisions become easier because you will want to see your wild visitors sticking around and thriving!

Before stepping into action, consider which level of wildlife habitat restoration fits you:

- Armchair Wildlife Habitat:** Perhaps for physical or other reasons, making changes in a landscape is not an option. Engaging others through conversation and dialogue, supporting community efforts, offering financial support, and voting are vital contributions.
- Landless Wildlife Habitat:** No landscape to make over? Even containers make a difference. Community properties offer volunteer opportunities. Family or friends may appreciate your help converting their landscape. Or you might consider becoming an ecological landscaper!
- Step-by-step Wildlife Habitat:** You would love to convert all of your property to a rich wildlife habitat right now, but your time or resources are currently limited. You may want to pick and choose which actions are most interesting to you and feasible to do now. You can then gather the resources for other actions over time.
- Gung-ho! Wildlife Habitat:** You have the time, resources, and inspiration to transform your entire landscape. You may be able to do every action in this guide!



Whatever level of action feels comfortable for you, we are thrilled that you are embarking on this journey with us! Let's get going!