

It's the Homeowner Who Can Make the Difference

by Mary Wilson



The word Pollinator seems to be enjoying its moment in the sun. Most nurseries and big box stores use the word to promote their plants and seeds, while graphic designs of bees and butterflies appear on a multitude of consumer products. The frequent use of the word and of the graphics reflect a general, although sometimes vague, awareness of a problem. If the problem has permeated the consciousness of the general public, that is a good thing because it is the general public (especially the homeowner) who can make a real difference.

Doug Tallamy tells us that almost 90% of the land in the eastern United States is in private ownership. If changes are to be made in the way landscapes are maintained, the government has very little power except on property which it controls. Americans traditionally are very protective of their right to do what they want with “my land.” It seems then that volunteer efforts at the individual homeowner level are the way that meaningful change could happen.

Enter Doug Tallamy with his persuasive books, lectures and webinars. If you haven't seen/heard him, put it on your to-do list. He outlines the problem (which is significant and discouraging) but he gives us hope by way of ideas that empower us to take charge of our own yards.

One of these initiatives is the *Homegrown National Park* which is based on the concept of minimizing lawn areas, ecological dead zones, on your properties. If everyone reduced their lawn by half, we would have the equivalent of a new, 20-million-acre natural area – plus less toxic runoff from fertilizers and herbicides. Reducing your lawn frees up space to plant

native plants, creating habitat which will better serve pollinators, birds and wildlife.

Reducing your lawn by half would be amazing but reducing it by any percentage is a huge step in the right direction. There are a number of approaches to do this. One is to create small meadows by letting the grass grow and see what native plants emerge (removing any invasives) and maybe enhancing it by planting native plants in your meadow. Another is to increase the size and/or number of flower beds, leaving enough grass to create pathways through the yard.

Fall is a good time to plan for changes in your yard. If you envision more space for native plants you might want to put cardboard down covered by mulch over existing areas of grass now which will make digging the area in the spring much easier.

Just thinking of the possibilities and knowing that we are part of the solution just feels good!

For more information see [10 Things to Get You Started / Doug Tallamy — HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK](#)