

Bat-friendly Gardening in the Okanagan

Spring is at our doorstep! This is the most exciting season for gardeners and nature lovers. This year, we encourage everyone to try something new gardening for BATS!

The Okanagan is home to at least 14 different species of insect-eating bats – the highest diversity of bats in the province. Supporting pollinators in your garden helps to support bats as they prey on insects at night. Since bats are active from dusk to dawn, having night-blooming flowers in your garden attracts nighttime moths which are a great source of protein for bats. This practice is called moonlight gardening!

Join us in cultivating bat-friendly gardens and nurturing the rich biodiversity of the North Okanagan:

1. Start planning early. Opt for native perennial plants – contact local plant nurseries to get your seeds.
2. Choose plants with long flowering season or those that flower at different times of the year.
3. Variety is key! Pick plants with different flower colour, shape, and fragrance.
4. Don't spring into garden clean up too soon. Wait until temperatures stay consistently above 10°C to start to start raking and pruning. Many pollinators like bees and butterflies are wintering in dead leaves and hollow stems of last-year plants. Bats and snakes sometimes also sleep under leaves and in wood piles.
5. Invasive species like burdock can entangle bats and birds. Regularly remove weeds from your garden. If you plan on harvesting burdock, please be responsible and prune out the flowers before they go to seed and become traps for bats. ([Image 1](#))
6. Pesticides and chemical fertilizers kill insects and poison wildlife. Practice organic gardening by avoiding chemical products. Try composting to provide organic nutrients in your garden.
7. Fact: Bats fertilize gardens with their nitrogen-rich guano (bat poop). Attract bats to have a natural source of guano fertilizer in your garden.
8. Switch outdoor light bulbs to “warm” toned or filtered LEDs (under 3,000K) to reduce light pollution that harms bats and other animals. Dimmers, motion sensors, and timers can help to reduce illumination and save energy.
9. Keep pets indoors or supervised outdoors to avoid predation on bats and birds.
10. Keep dead standing trees (if it is safe to do so) and mature trees on your property to provide roosting areas for hard-working bats. Peeling tree bark and bark crevices are great homes for bats.
11. If you have a lake, creek or wetland by your house – great! Protect natural water-side vegetation; it provides vital food, shelter and water to wildlife.
12. Consider adding a garden pond to create a biodiversity oasis in your backyard. Ponds need to be at least 3m wide to serve as drinking sources for bats.

For more information on bat-friendly gardening and recommended plants for the Okanagan region, please refer to our informative poster below.

BC Community Bat Program
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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bcbats>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/gotbats/>

BAT - FRIENDLY GARDENING IN THE OKANAGAN



The Okanagan is the luckiest region when it comes to bats!

We have the highest diversity of bats compared to the rest of the province. As many as 15 bat species call this area home!

Safety first

- Keep cats indoors to prevent predation on bats and other wildlife.
- Keep your garden naturally dark at night. Turn the outdoor lights off. Use warm light bulbs.
- If you are ever concerned or find an injured bat, contact the BC Community Bat Program.

Bats LOVE insects

Every night, bats work hard to control insect populations, benefitting us and protecting agriculture from pests. **One little bat can eat 600 mosquitoes in just one hour!** Can you imagine how many insects a group of bats can catch overnight?

Organic gardening

Pesticides and chemical fertilizers kill insects and poison wildlife.

- Your garden benefits from the nitrogen-rich guano of local bats. Remember, to help prevent the spread of White nose Syndrome, do not transport the guano off-site.
- Do not apply pesticides, insecticides and other harmful chemicals in your garden.
- Try composting to provide organic nutrients in your garden.

Like all wildlife, bats need food, water, and shelter to survive

A small pond or a riparian area is a great source of food and shelter for bats.

- Build a pond that is at least 3m in diameter.
- Help restore riparian areas with natural vegetation.

Cozy homes for roosting bats

Bats often roost under the tree bark, in tree hollows and cavities, wood piles, in old sheds and attics, as well as under roofing or siding of some buildings.

Moonlight gardening

Bats are nocturnal, they are active at night feeding on insects like moths, beetles and mosquitoes.

- Flowers that stay open through the night attract nocturnal insects.
- White or pale-coloured flowers can be easily seen by bats at night.
- Moonlight is ideal for bats! Turn off porch lights at night to prevent light pollution.

• Keep dead-standing trees (if it is safe to do so) and mature trees in your yard to provide roosting areas for hard-working bats. Loose tree bark and bark crevices also make great homes for bats.

• Consider building a bat house or a bat condo! Learn more about bat boxes on BC Community Bat Program website.

A LIST OF NATIVE OKANAGAN PLANTS FOR YOUR BAT - FRIENDLY GARDEN

Plant a variety of indigenous Okanagan flowers, perennials, shrubs and trees to support local bats, nighttime insect pollinators and overall biodiversity in your garden. See the examples below.

Flowers	Trees	Shrubs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canada Goldenrod • Showy Milkweed • Moss Campion • Spreading Phlox • Evening Primrose • Shrubby Penstemon • Common Yarrow • Desert Yellow Fleabane • Showy Fleabane • Sticky Geranium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain Ash • Water Birch • Paper Birch • Trembling Aspen • Black Cottonwood • Douglas Maple • Ponderosa Pine • Dead tree snags (if safe to keep) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saskatoon • Waxy or Sticky Currant • Chokecherry • Red Raspberry • Prickly Rose, Nootka Rose • Mock orange • Big Sagebrush • Orange Honeysuckle • Red-osier Dogwood

Okanagan Nurseries

- Wild Bloom Nursery Kelowna
- XEN Xeriscape Endemic Nursery and Ecological Solutions - West Kelowna
- Sagebrush Nursery Oliver



Learn more on bcbats.ca or email us at okanaganbats@gmail.com.



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Invasive species like burdock can entangle bats.

If you plan on harvesting burdock, please be responsible and prune out the flowers before they go to seed and become traps for bats.

Photo by: Ken Dzinbal