

# Plants for Pollinators: Coreopsis

Coreopsis has rapidly grown in popularity, with many cultivars and hybridized versions showing up in wild colors at nurseries across the U.S. These wildflowers are not necessarily “pollinator magnets,” to begin with, and the breeding of native species for color variation may lead to cultivars that are even less attractive to pollinators. That said, they are dependable, long-blooming flowers and some species can attract a diversity (if not an abundance) of pollinators.

Prairie coreopsis (*C. palmata*), for example, is visited by long-horned bees (*Melissodes* spp.), small carpenter bees (*Ceratina* spp.), leafcutter bees (*Megachile* spp.), cuckoo bees (*Coelioxys* spp.), and sulphur butterflies.

Beekeepers consider all Coreopsis species to be good honey sources. In the past, some American Indian tribes applied boiled Coreopsis seeds to painful areas of their bodies in order to relieve ailments such as rheumatism.” The common name is shared by a wide range of plants who have seeds that easily attach to skin or clothing of passersby.



Coreopsis is best suited for low-care perennial that attracts a number of specialist pollinators. An inexpensive option for large scale restoration projects that allows other perennials time to establish.



## **Coreopsis lanceolata (Lance-leaf Coreopsis)**

Lance-leaf Coreopsis waves brightly in late spring and early summer on sunny sites with dry or sandy soil. The bright yellow, daisy-like flowers are about 1 1/2" in diameter and bloom singly on long stems. The ray petals have four deep lobes on their margins. Butterflies are regular visitors, and songbirds feed on the ripe seeds in late summer. This durable plant grows in any well-drained soil, and exults in dry sandy soils. This species also is commonly called Sand Coreopsis.

## **Coreopsis palmata (Prairie Coreopsis)**

Prairie Coreopsis matures to a height of just 2'. It prefers medium to dry soil conditions and sets striking yellow flowers for 3-4 weeks, usually in June and July. Beekeepers consider all Coreopsis species to be good honey sources. In the past, some American Indian tribes applied boiled Coreopsis seeds to painful areas of their bodies in order to relieve ailments such as rheumatism. Other common names in use include Tickseed, Stiff Tickseed, and Stiff Coreopsis.

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## **Coreopsis tripteris (Tall Coreopsis)**

As its name implies, *Coreopsis tripteris* (Tall Coreopsis) stands quite tall reaching heights of 7' and in some cases up to 9'. Arranged in a flat-topped cluster, the flowers comprise a disk of yellow, deepening to purple-red. The leaves are divided into three lobes. Tall Coreopsis is aggressive and therefore may not be suitable for small landscape plantings.

## **Coreopsis palmata (Stiff Coreopsis)**

The highly popular Stiff Coreopsis (*Coreopsis palmata*) sports bright yellow flowers during the dog days of mid-summer. The underground rhizomes spread and form a dense mat, making it excellent for stabilizing dry, sunny slopes and even sand dunes! This species is a perfect match for the most difficult dry soils.

## **Coreopsis rosea (Rose Coreopsis)**

Rose Coreopsis is a showy, rare to endangered native of eastern states. Readily propagated, fine, dense green foliage gives way to numerous small pink flowers with yellow centers in mid-summer. A profuse and lengthy bloomer, *Coreopsis rosea* can be cut back in late summer to promote new early Autumn flowers. An excellent ground cover or border plant, Rose Coreopsis spreads easily, forming attractive patches.