

# Inviting Fireflies to Your Landscape

By Christy Shivell of Shy Valley Farm

Most of us have wonderful childhood memories of warm summer nights spent catching fireflies, in open spaces twinkling with innumerable soft signals of light. And most of us recognize that there are far fewer fireflies than we remember. The following suggestions can help you assist these unique and lovely creatures to make a comeback by providing habitats where they can thrive.

- Minimize light pollution to allow fireflies the chance to communicate and reproduce. Turn off outdoor lighting.
- Cut your lawn less often, let it grow higher, keep an area of the yard unmowed.
- Leave the leaves! Allow leaves to deteriorate in place. Fireflies need undisturbed ground to thrive.
- Use native grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees to provide cover and structure at various heights.
- Include water in your landscape. A small pool of water is beneficial to fireflies and other insects, amphibians, and birds. It does not have to be elaborate.
- Don't keep your landscape too clean. Leaf litter, logs, downed branches, and grasses' previous year's leaves are all excellent for firefly habitat. Fireflies tend to thrive in diverse multispecies meadows, riparian areas, wooded areas, and "waste areas" like fencerows, "unkempt" roadsides and the like. Given this knowledge, it is easy to see why fireflies are not thriving as the sprawl of manicured landscapes continues.

## Suggested Plants:

**Eastern gamagrass** (*Tripsacum dactyloides*)

**Inland sea oats** (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

**Switchgrass** (*Panicum virgatum*)

**Indiangrass** (*Sorghastrum nutans*)

**Muhly grass** (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)

**Prairie Dropseed** (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

**Virginia Wildrye or Bottlebrush Grass** (*Elymus virginicus* or *E. hystrix*)

**Sideoats grama or Blue grama** (*Bouteloua curtipendula*, *Bouteloua gracilis*)

**Asters**

**Goldenrod** (*Solidago* sp)

**Cardinal Flower and Great Blue Lobelia** (*Lobelia cardinalis* or *L. siphilitica*)

**Boneset** (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)

**Joe Pye** (*Eupatorium fistulosum*)

**Buttonbush** (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

**Common Milkweed** (*Asclepius syriaca*)

**Pine, Maple, Walnut, Hickory, Sycamore**

**American Elder** (*Sambucus canadensis*)

**Ash, Hackberry, Elm, Dogwood, Oak**

Resources for more learning:

[Fireflies, Glow-worms, and Lightning Bugs](#), by Lynn Frierson Faust

Firefly.org (Please note their plants lists are specific to Texas)

<https://www.darksky.org/>

<https://xerces.org/publications/guidelines/conserving-jewels-of-night>

<https://fireflyersinternational.net/>

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