

# Houston Zoo at Home

## POLLINATORS

### **iNaturalist**

#### **All Ages**

Pollinators are insects or animals that help distribute pollen from one plant to another. These different species can range from our local monarch butterflies to the lemurs you can see at the Houston Zoo. There are a huge number of plants that attract or feed pollinators in every stage of their lives. Plant identification can be as easy as snapping a picture! iNaturalist is a free observation platform that allows you to identify plants and animals in your backyard right from your smart phone. Scientist use the data collected to help with their research which means you are a citizen scientist! Discover what pollinators your backyard is attracting and help further pollinator research!

#### **Materials Needed:**

- A cell phone or tablet
- INaturalist App
- Your eyes!

#### **Steps**

1. Download the iNaturalist app to your device
2. Explore the app to learn how it works
3. Go outside into your backyard and take some pictures
4. Upload pictures to iNaturalist to be identified
5. Go a step further and participate in the City Nature Challenge 2020! Take your identification skills to your favorite park and make some new discoveries! <https://citynaturechallenge.org/>

### **Share your project with us!**

Tag your photo using #HoustonZoo or email us your story at [communications@houstonzoo.org](mailto:communications@houstonzoo.org).

# Seed Balls

All Ages

Seed Balls

Seed balls are an easy way to add pollinator plants to any size garden, flower bed, or even window box in your apartment! Pollinator plants are important because they provide food for pollinators (think about the bees, butterflies, and bats that live at the Houston Zoo) who in turn help us grow the food we depend on every day. Give back this Earth Week and create some space for them!

## Materials Needed:

- Potting Soil
- Air-dry clay or clay powder
- Water
- Seeds - Native seeds are best to support native pollinators. To find out which plants are native to your area, check out the National Audubon Society's Native Plant Search. If you're in Texas, we really like the Native American Seed company.
- Large bowl or tub for mixing
- Flat tray for drying

## Steps:

1. Mix 2 parts potting soil, 5 parts clay, and 1 part water in a large bowl or tub. Mix thoroughly until there are no lumps; it should feel smooth and hold together easily.
2. Add 1-2 parts seeds and keep kneading until they are well mixed. Add more water if necessary.
3. Pinch off small pieces of the mixture and roll into small balls (1- or 2-inches diameter). Again, if crumbly, add more water; they should hold their shape well.
4. Dry seeds for a few days out in the open or in a cardboard box (not a plastic bag).
5. Once dry, sow your seeds! Place (or toss) them wherever you'd like them. That's it! No need to bury them or water them in. If indoors or on a covered balcony give them a quick rain shower sprinkle every now and then.
6. Enjoy your pollinator plants and watch to see what new pollinators come to visit!

Recipe adapted from [gardeningknowhow.com](http://gardeningknowhow.com).

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