

https://www.tribuneledgernews.com/lifestyle/gardening-with-the-masters-rattlesnake-master-and-western-sunflower-native-plants-that-support-life/article_379c46db-cd04-489c-bae1-0c2b181af595.html

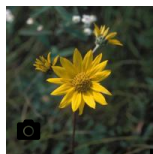
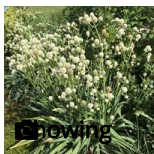
GARDENING WITH THE MASTERS | JODY MORGAN

GARDENING WITH THE MASTERS: Rattlesnake Master and Western Sunflower: Native Plants that Support Life

Aug 19, 2026



Morgan

[📁 Gift this article](#)

When homeowners consider adding flowers to their landscapes, colorful blooms often come to mind first. However, native plants offer much more than just beauty; they provide food, shelter, and habitat for the insects and wildlife that keep our ecosystems

healthy. Native plants have evolved alongside Georgia's pollinators for thousands of years, forming relationships that non-native ornamental plants simply cannot replicate.

If you are looking to enhance your garden with unique textures, long-lasting blooms, and significant ecological value, consider planting Rattlesnake Master and Western Sunflower. Although these two plants share the common goal of supporting pollinators, they differ markedly in appearance and growth habits. Together, they create a striking contrast in the landscape while providing nectar, pollen, and habitat throughout the growing season.



Spray WD-40 in Your Toilet



One of the most distinctive natural plants found in Georgia's grasslands and prairies is Rattlesnake Master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*). Because of its stiff, narrow, blue-green leaves, many people initially misidentified it as a yucca. In midsummer, robust stems emerge, adorned with tiny, globe-shaped white flower heads that resemble miniature pincushions. From a distance, the flowers may seem small, but a closer look reveals a vibrant array of insects actively gathering pollen and nectar.

Rattlesnake Master is one of the most valuable native plants for beneficial insects. During its peak bloom, the flower heads often attract native bees, honeybees, butterflies, skippers, soldier beetles, hover flies, wasps, and many other pollinators. Aphid wasps, which help naturally control garden pests such as caterpillars and aphids, are

particularly drawn to the abundant nectar. By supporting both pollinators and beneficial predators, this remarkable plant contributes to a healthier, more balanced garden ecosystem.

Providing a completely different look is Western Sunflower (*Helianthus occidentalis*), another exceptional native plant of Georgia. Unlike the familiar annual sunflowers commonly seen in vegetable gardens, Western Sunflower is a perennial that returns year after year with little maintenance. Its tall stems are topped with cheerful yellow flowers that brighten the landscape from midsummer into early fall, extending the flowering season when many summer perennials begin to fade.

One distinctive characteristic of Western Sunflower is its foliage. Most of the leaves are concentrated near the base of the plant, allowing the upright flowering stems to remain uncluttered and enabling the bright blooms to seemingly float above neighboring plants. This graceful growth habit adds height and movement without overpowering nearby flowers.



Western Sunflower serves as an important nectar source for a wide variety of native bees, butterflies, beetles, and other pollinating insects.

The annual Great Southeast Pollinator Census offers individuals an opportunity to engage in citizen science. This year's census will take place on Saturday, August 21, from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

The Cherokee County Master Gardeners will organize free public counting events at three locations: the Cherokee County Senior Center on Univeter Road, Veterans Park, and Ball Ground Botanical Garden. Happy Gardening!!!

Jody Morgan is one of many UGA Master Gardener Extension Volunteers of Cherokee County.

MORE INFORMATION



GARDENING WITH THE MASTERS: Webs on Tree Branches



GARDENING WITH THE MASTERS: August Gardening Tips



GARDENING WITH THE MASTERS: CAMELLIA – A “Must Have” Shrub for your Garden

