



MBNZT Public Spaces Pollinator Survey

Purpose

This survey explored how councils and organisations across Aotearoa New Zealand are supporting pollinators, particularly butterflies and moths, within public spaces.

Sample

21 responses from local authorities and organisations involved in land management, biodiversity, and parks.

Key Findings

1. Biodiversity is supported but insects are rarely named

While most respondents demonstrate a commitment to biodiversity, few explicitly reference pollinators, butterflies, or moths in formal strategies and plans. This represents a critical gap in visibility and prioritisation.

2. Pollinator-friendly practices are already underway

Activities such as native planting, habitat restoration, and reduced mowing are common. However, these are typically not framed or recognised as pollinator initiatives.

3. Inconsistent implementation of low-mow practices

Reduced mowing is applied unevenly. Social expectations of tidy landscapes, alongside operational constraints, limit broader adoption.

4. Ongoing tension around pesticide use

Approaches vary widely, from reduction strategies to continued routine use. There is an opportunity to promote practical, pollinator-safe alternatives.

5. Wasp management is recognised but variable

Most respondents acknowledge wasps as a threat to biodiversity, but control methods are inconsistent and often reactive.

6. Strong appetite for collaboration

Respondents are either already working with community groups or are open to doing so, signalling a significant opportunity for partnership.

7. Clear demand for guidance and tools

There is strong interest in:

- Case studies and proven examples
 - Practical management guidelines
 - Communication resources (especially to address public concerns)
 - Planting and habitat design advice
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Key Barriers

- Public perception of “messy” spaces
 - Fear of complaints
 - Internal council silos
 - Maintenance contracts not aligned with ecological goals
 - Lack of explicit policy direction
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Strategic Implications

Councils are making meaningful progress but lack:

- Clear pollinator-specific policy language
- Confidence in implementation
- Coordinated national support

MBNZT should help:

- Provide practical guidance and case studies
 - Support policy development
 - Enable community-council partnerships
 - Facilitate long-term monitoring and data collection
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Conclusion

This survey indicates that Aotearoa New Zealand’s councils are part of the way along the journey toward pollinator-friendly public spaces. With targeted support, existing efforts can be amplified into a coordinated, visible, and effective national approach.