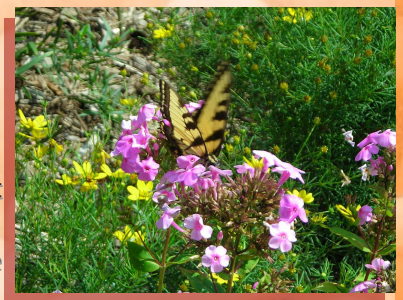
How to Attract Native Pollinators

When thinking about planting vegetation to attract native pollinators you need to make sure that there is sufficient water supply, habitat, food and shelter. In order to fulfill these requirements you need to:



USDA

Plant a range of flowers that attract a variety of pollinators, bloom at different times of the year and provide habitat for all stages of a pollinator's life cycle.

Plant flowers in bunches; they are more visible when flying above and will be more attractive to pollinators.

Minimize the use of pesticides and chemicals in your garden, as some can harm pollinators.

Choose native plant varieties in order to minimize introduction of exotic species and support native pollinators.

For more information on native pollinators visit: http://www.xerces.org

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PollinaTerps is a collective group of University of Maryland (UMD) students, staff, faculty, local scientists and local community members working to build a bee friendly community through research, education, habitat creation and preservation. UMD partners include the UMD Department of Entomology, the campus Arboretum, Dining Services, and Extension.

PollinaTerps
Building a Bee-Friendly Community

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The Importance of Native Pollinators

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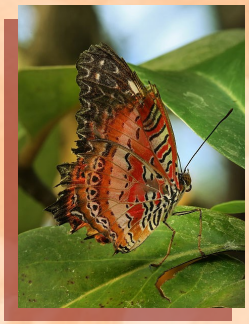
Types of Pollinators

Bees: Bees are attracted to brightly colored flowers that are aromatic and full of nectar. Bees see colors in the ultraviolet spectrum, so they cannot see red, but they are attracted to yellow, blue, purple, violet and white flowers. Bees also like plants that are open shaped or have hooded blooms, and flowers with a "landing pattern" that guides them to the nectar source. Some favorite flowers for bees are sunflowers, sage, lavender, and snapdragons.

Derrick Ditchburn



Richard Bartz

Butterflies: Butterflies like brightly colored flowers with a fresh odor. Some of their favorite flowers include: asters, zinnias, honeysuckle morning glory and gardenia.

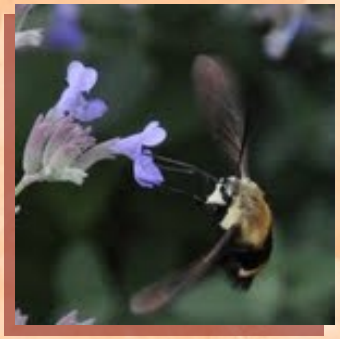
Hummingbirds: Hummingbirds require a very abundant nectar source. They generally prefer red, unscented flowers but will go wherever abundant nectar sources are located. Flowers that are hummingbird pollinated have nectar at the bottom of tube-like flowers that fit their beaks. Some favorite flowers for hummingbirds include: honeysuckles, fuchsias, and azaleas.

Dario Sanches

Environmental Benefits of Pollinators

For plants to reproduce they need to be pollinated. Pollination is the process by which pollen is transferred from the anthers (male part) of one flower to the stigma (or female part) of the flower, enabling fertilization to take place. Some flowers can fertilize themselves in a process called self-fertilization.

In order for a flower to produce a fruit it needs to be fertilized.



UMD Arboretum

Pollinators are responsible for providing about one out of every three mouthfuls of food we eat.

By pollinating plants, pollinators allow plants to carry out their lifecycle and provide valuable services to the natural environment.

These services include:

- Capturing excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere through photosynthesis.
- Improving the quality of the air we breath.
- Providing habitat for animals.
- Providing support for soil through root growth.

Decline of Native Pollinators

Native pollinator populations have been drastically declining, and many species are listed as endangered or threatened. An exact cause of this decline is unknown but some possible causes include:

- Overuse of chemicals in agricultural practices.
- Introduced non-native pollinators are out competing native species of pollinators.
- Destruction of native pollinator habitat.
- Introduced parasites and diseases that case pollinator death.

Some of the potential impacts of the decline in pollinators include:

- Loss of plant diversity, without which cross-pollinating plants cannot reproduce.
- Decreased agricultural productivity and subsequent economic losses estimated at over $40 billion dollars (USDA).
- The need for costly manual pollination.
- Loss of plant diversity, which would result in diminished air quality.

Jon Sullivan