

Pollinators in the City

Description

It was just a few years ago that homeowners were asking what they could plant that would not attract bees. Now, the question is more likely to be, "How can I attract bees and other pollinators to my garden?"



Attracting Pollinators

As important as European honeybees are to agriculture, especially fruit and nut production, they are no match for the 4000 species of native bees that inhabit the U.S. Fortunately, colony Collapse Disorder does not affect native bees, which tend to live alone or in comparatively small colonies. However, native bees are affected by some of the same factors that threaten honeybees, particularly loss of habitat and pesticide use. From the tiny sweat bee to the large carpenter bee, native bees come in all shapes and sizes. Some nest underground, while others choose hollow stems or holes in trees.



Over the millennia, native bees and other pollinators, such as butterflies and beetles, have evolved with native plants to mutual benefit. Therefore it follows that planting native flowers will provide these insects with their preferred nectar and pollen. The nectar provides them with energy, and the pollen is often carried back to the hive to feed the larvae. It is transferred from plant to plant in the process, ensuring the plant's survival—a classic example of a mutualistic relationship.

For more information related to Nurture Nature Center's Urban Garden Project, see <http://nurturenaturecenter.org/garden/>

Resources:

The Xerces Society, www.xerces.org



Facts:

- Flowers planted in clumps of at least four feet in diameter are more attractive to pollinators than scattered individual flowers.
- A succession of flowering plants that lasts from spring through fall will support a range of bee species.
- Flowers of different shapes will attract different types of pollinators.
- Pesticides are a major threat to insect pollinators.

