

ongardening | a place for pollinators

BY LAURIE DAVIES ADAMS

The bees, hummingbirds, butterflies, moths, beetles and flies that visit flowering plants for nectar and pollen make an invaluable contribution to our lives. Nearly 80 percent of all flowering plants require visits by pollinators to set seed and bear fruit. That means an estimated one out of every third bite of food we eat in this country is available to us thanks to an often unseen, and certainly unheralded, army of pollinators.

Bees are the champion pollinators, with close to 90% of the heavy lifting in agriculture done by the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*). But a coterie of nearly 3500 species of U.S. native bees and other invertebrate and vertebrate pollinators make significant contributions to our bounty. Tragically, wild and managed bees are showing disturbing signs of decline around the globe. Of the many stressors affecting bees (disease, parasites, pesticides, invasive competition, changing climate and more), the most easily remedied is their need for healthy habitat. This is the most widely scientifically agreed upon solution, too. Sharing your landscape with pollinators provides immediate support for languishing colonies and broods. You'll be rewarded; studies have shown that if you want a bumper crop of cucumbers or to-



matoes, you'll have to plant some local wildflowers as well.

Pollinator.org is a great place to start making your garden a helpful habitat. You'll find regional planting lists and bloom periods so you can provide continuous floral resources throughout the growing season. You'll also learn how to set up bee blocks for wood nesters, ways to reduce chemical misuse in your garden, how to create larger targets for beneficial insects by consolidating colors—and much more.

Part of the theme is to S.H.A.R.E your garden. Simply Have Areas Reserved for the Environment. You don't need to rip out your entire

lawn or remove all non-native ornamentals; just look for a way to share part of your habitat.

How will you know you have succeeded? Go out in the garden on a sunny midday. Stop and close your eyes. If you hear the buzz, click, chirp and hum of pollinators, you'll know that you have made a difference. For me, a garden trip may reveal a gracefully fluttering Western swallowtail, a slowly foraging yellow-faced bumblebee or an insistent Anna's hummingbird set on claiming "his" flowers.

A gardener's plants are pollinators' life source; you are the key to pollinators' future.

LAURIE DAVIES ADAMS is the Executive Director of the nonprofit Pollinator Partnership, which aims to protect pollinators through education, conservation and research. Its initiatives include the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign and National Pollinator Week.

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