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May 8, 2024

Providing for Pollinators

This week's ReFresh topic falls under the category of 'Societal Health'. The timing is also perfect as you begin to pick out flowers this spring for your garden, patio planters, or hanging baskets.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, 75% of the world's flowering plants and about 35% of food crops depend on animal pollinators to reproduce. That's one out of every three bites of food you eat!

Pollinating animals travel from plant to plant carrying pollen on their bodies in a crucial process that facilitates the reproductive system of most flowering plants. These are the very plants that:

- bring us countless fruits, vegetables, and nuts
- stabilize soil
- clean the air
- protect us from severe weather
- support other wildlife
- produce half of the world's oils, fibers, and raw materials

However, bees and some other pollinators are disappearing due to the many challenges of the modern world. Habitat loss, disease, parasites, and environmental contaminants have all contributed to the decline of many species of pollinators. Pollinators that can't find the right quantity or quality of food (nectar and pollen from blooming plants within flight range) do not survive. There are simply not enough pollinator-friendly plantings to support pollinators.

Consider this an invitation to do your part! Pollinators do best when they have access to native plants. Below is a list of flowering plants that can attract bees, butterflies, and even hummingbirds to your garden.

[Click here](#) to learn about specific plants for specific pollinators.

1. **Lavandula spp. (Lavender):** Its fragrant flowers not only add beauty and aroma to your garden, but also attract a host of pollinators, including bees and butterflies. Lavender thrives in full sun and well-drained soil.
2. **Salvia spp. (Sage):** With their nectar-rich flowers, and both annual and perennial varieties, sage is a magnet for bees and hummingbirds. It blooms from early summer into fall, providing long-lasting support for pollinators.
3. **Echinacea purpurea (Purple Coneflower):** This native perennial is adored by butterflies and bees. Its large, daisy-like flowers with prominent centers offer an easy landing pad and plenty of nectar.
4. **Rudbeckia (Black-eyed Susan):** This bright, cheerful perennial is not just eye-catching, but also highly effective at attracting butterflies and other pollinators to your garden.
5. **Monarda (Bee Balm):** Bee balm is irresistible to bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, thanks to its vibrant, nectar-rich flowers. It prefers moist, well-drained soil and can thrive in full sun to partial shade.
6. **Achillea millefolium (Yarrow):** Yarrow's flat-topped clusters of small flowers are excellent for attracting a wide variety of pollinators. It is drought-tolerant and thrives in full sun, making it an easy-care option for any pollinator garden.
7. **Penstemon (Beardtongue):** Penstemon's tubular flowers are perfectly shaped for hummingbird feeding but also attract bees and butterflies. This plant prefers well-drained soil and full to partial sun.

Many municipalities publish listings of local pollinator plants to encourage locals to provide a great pollinator habitat. Check out your local city or district website.

Meanwhile, here are some great links, with specific information for your area:

Across BC:

<https://davidsuzuki.org/living-green/what-native-plants-attract-pollinators-in-british-columbia/>

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/animals-and-crops/animal-production/bees/food-for-bees/bee-forage-plants>

Great PDF that divides pollinators into different types of plants: flowers, trees, vegetables etc.:

<https://bcfarmsandfood.com/plant-a-bee-attracting-garden>

Victoria: <https://bcbeehealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BEE001General-Technical-Guide-for-Creating-Pollinator-Habitat-Victoria-BCfinal.pdf>

Lower Mainland: <https://www.pollinator.org/PDFs/Guides/LowerMainland.ver6.hires.pdf>

Okanagan: https://borderfreebees.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Elle_Bees_Flowers_Okanagan.pdf

Kootenays: <https://kootenaynativeplants.ca/get-involved/native-plants-for-native-pollinators/>

Kamloops: <https://www.kamloopsbeekeepers.com/education/honey-bees/plants-to-attract-bees-and-pollinators/>

Cariboo: <https://urbanbeenetwork.ca/images/pdfs/CaribooPlants.pdf>

Thank you for “bee-ing” helpful, and supporting the well-being of pollinators and society!

Other source: <https://www.pollinator.org/pollinators>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. M. Jones' or similar, with a stylized, cursive script.

Rochelle Morandini

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpypa.bc.ca.