

## *Buzzin' Around with the Hillsborough Garden Club*

### **POLLINATOR GARDENING FUNDAMENTALS:**

*Importance of gardening to support pollinator insects /animals*

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By now most of us know how important pollinators are for a high percentage of our food supply. They are also needed for many of the plants that we enjoy in our gardens, parks and wild areas. Pollinators are not only the European honeybees who give us honey but also the native bees, beetles, flies, butterflies, and moths who feed on and pollinate our native plants and garden flowers and vegetables. The fruits and vegetables from this pollination service not only benefit us humans but also other animals and birds who depend on these plants for their food and shelter. Other animals such as bats act as pollinators too; but bees are our most important group of pollinators because of the large number of flowers they visit each day.

Gardening for pollinators is important for all of us. Because of human causes such as shrinking habitat and pesticides and herbicide use, we are losing more pollinators than ever before. This needs to change. Your garden is a great place to start.

Here are some helpful hints to get you started:

1. To make sure these pollinators get a steady supply of food, plant a variety of plants that bloom at various times throughout the year in a sunny sheltered location. Your garden can be as little as a few pots on a deck or a small area in your yard or up to acres of meadows.

2. Our native bees evolved with native plants so be sure to include these. Plant in groupings of 8 to 10 or more to facilitate bee foraging. Many native bees do not travel more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile.
3. Leave some leaf litter and a bare patch of ground, as many of our bees nest in the ground and over winter under leaf litter. Leave some dead twigs and wood around for those that nest there. Leave some areas a little “messy”. Also include native trees and flowering shrubs; stay away from invasive plants.
4. To let the community know what you are trying to do, signs such as “Gardening for Wildlife” or “No Spray Zone” will get the point across.
5. Shrink your lawn area. Make your pollinator garden look intentional with stone edging or short fencing.
6. Set your lawnmower blade higher to let clover and violets bloom underneath the grass for the bees and mow less often. A perfect lawn is of no use to our pollinators and typically needs a lot of water to maintain.
7. Use natural fertilizer and mulch. Use compost from your compost bins.
8. Tell your neighbors about your efforts. Point out the pollinators in your yard. Share some plants or vegetables.
9. Buy your plants from reputable places, e.g. garden club plant sales and the NC Botanical Gardens and other garden

centers that do not treat the plants with neonicotinoids, which are powerful pesticides.

10. Finally, read and research about this issue, there is much out there. Enjoy your pollinators and know you are doing something good for our earth.

**Buzzin' Around** is an educational project of the Hillsborough Garden Club in support of Hillsborough as the 35<sup>th</sup> Bee City USA. Bee City USA<sup>®</sup> galvanizes communities to sustain pollinators responsible for 1 in 3 bites we eat and the reproduction of almost 90% of the world's flowering plant species –by providing them with healthy habitat, rich in a variety of native plants, and free to nearly free of pesticides. Bee City USA is an initiative of the Xerces Society. <https://www.beecityusa.org>.