

Pollinator Stewardship



Pollination occurs when pollen from the male parts of a plant is transferred to the female parts. It is essential to the production of a fruit, vegetable, grain or any other plant-based foods. Because plants can't move, around 90% of this essential act is carried out via external vectors such as wind, insects and animals.

If the insects and other animals responsible for carrying out this important act are put at risk, our food supply is directly affected. It's estimated that wild insects provide \$57 Billion worth of ecosystem services! "Over three-quarters of wild flowering plants and one-third of the food we eat depend on insect pollination."

* David Suzuki Foundation, 2025

How to be a Pollinator Steward (a.k.a. Build It and They Will Come!)

Plant for Pollinators!

- **Plant Native wildflowers:** Grow plants that Native pollinators like mason, leaf-cutter, and sweat bees are used to harvesting from and living around.
- **Continual blooming period:** Plant early, mid and late season flowering plants so early emergers (like mason bees) and those that are present until the last bloom has gone have something to feed on (see table below).
- **Clumps:** Grow clumps of the same plant so that pollinators have easy access to nectar and lots of pollen.
- **Diversity:** Grow different flower shapes and colours to accommodate a range of different pollinator species. E.g. bell shaped flowers are good for insects with long proboscises like butterflies and some bees, while umbel shaped flowers provide a nice landing pad for other pollinators to stand on while they work.
- **Diversity:** If you put up a mason bee condo or know you have a hot pollinator nesting spot, plant flowering species close by so they will have something to eat as soon as they emerge in spring.



Here are some plants to grow to ensure food is available for pollinators throughout the season.

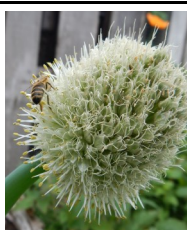
Bloom Time	Species
Early	red flowering currant, red paintbrush, osoberry, clove currant, sedum, welsh onion, oregon grape, saskatoon, wooly sunflower, lupine, western buttercup, columbine
Mid	lavender, coneflower, yarrow, phacelia, roses, borage, wildflowers, pearly everlasting, fireweed
Late	coneflower, globe thistle, goldenrod, snowberry, gumweed, goldenrod, douglas aster



Red Flowering
Currant



Clove Currant



Welsh Onion



Oregon Grape



Phacelia



Columbine



Borage

Create Habitat:

- **A little mess is best:** Leaving small piles of leaves and brush including hollow plant stems provides nesting spots and watering holes for thirsty pollinators (bonus = less work for you). Don't disturb the brush too early in the spring either.
- **Leave small patches of bare soil that catch the sun:** Most of our native bees are ground nesters, meaning that they need bare spots of dirt to burrow into. Sides of pathways are often convenient areas as opposed to in your garden bed.
- **Don't use landscape cloth or black plastic:** This minimizes access to the ground that our native bees need for reproducing (and it ends up being landfilled in the long-run anyways!).
- **Leave larger holes and cavities for the bumbles:** These bees nest in cavities abandoned by mice, birds, or humans.
- Put up a **mason bee condo** (or a bunch of them to make a hotel), it will also be used by leafcutters later in the season!
- **Bunchgrass tussocks** are natural nesting sites for ground nesting bees as well - an extra bonus to native plantings.
- Put **water** out in the dryest months in a shallow dish with rocks in it so pollinators can drink.



A Word on Neonicotinoids

What Are They?

- Neonicotinoids (neonics) are a class of pesticides that have been proven harmful to bees, birds, and even earthworms!
- Neonicotinoids are systemic, meaning that once applied, they spread throughout the entire plant so that all parts contain the pesticide, including nectar and pollen. Pollinators ingest and absorb the pesticide during their pollinating and feeding activities.
- Neonics are harmful even in low doses, negatively affecting pollinators' immune systems and foraging abilities

What You Can Do

- Your best guarantee that neonics have not been used at any stage of plant growth is to purchase seeds, plants and seedlings from local producers that use organic practices.
- If you aren't sure, ask. Call the nursery that grew the plant and inquire as to what pesticides they use on their plants.
- Avoid purchasing from large garden centres, unless you can obtain confirmation that they do not stock plants that have been exposed to neonics

For more information: <http://foecanada.org/en/the-bee-cause/>; <https://davidsuzuki.org/project/pollinators/>



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