

The Well-Tended Pollinator Garden

Everyone knows that bees and butterflies make the world go round. There are many other important pollinators that we need to consider as well as the habitat that supports them.

For example, did you know that some plants are pollinated by flies? These flowers are usually pale and dull to dark brown or purple. Good examples are Jack-in-the-Pulpit or Paw-Paw.



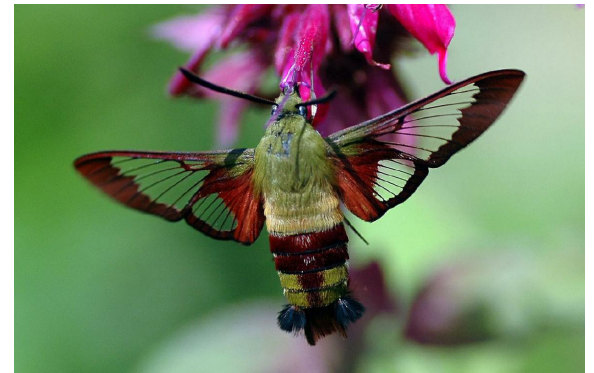
www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/images/asimina_triloba_lg.jpg



Tachnid Fly (Photo by Beatriz Moisset 2002-2004)

Or that some flies look like bees or wasps? There are more than 4,000 species of bees that are native to the United States. Most of them are solitary and don't build hives to defend so they aren't as aggressive as the imported honey bee. Very few of them sting! (In fact, native bees are estimated to pollinate 80 percent of flowering plants around the world!)

Many moths are as beautiful as butterflies and important pollinators as well. The Clearwing Hummingbird Moth is an amazing example. They fly and move, and even sound, just like hummingbirds. Like them, they can remain suspended in the air in front of a flower while they unfurl their long tongues and insert them in flowers to sip their nectar.



www.howardsview.com/Butterflies/HummingbirdClearwing-Moth.jpg

Our beautiful Woodland Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) is pollinated by both Swallowtail butterflies and Hummingbird Clearwing moths among other

pollinators. So consider yourself lucky if you have a shade garden where you can plant this lovely woodland wildflower!



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www.fcps.edu/islandcreekes/ecology/eastern_tiger_swallowtail.htm

Although we may want to only think of attracting beautiful butterflies to our garden such as the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterfly or Monarchs, we need to remember we are planting for other important pollinators as well.

Best Practices for Pollinator Gardens

The absolute best pollinator gardens – or even butterfly gardens for that matter – share the following characteristics.



- Include a variety of native plants; these are the plants that our pollinators evolved with and are adapted to. Most introduced plant species may offer nectar but are otherwise food deserts. Make sure to mix natives in with your other favorite garden species. Midwest Groundcovers sales staff can help you select species that will work well in the garden.
- Provide for all of the life cycle phases and food and shelter needs of the pollinators you want to attract. This is particularly important with butterflies and moths where our gardens need to provide places to lay eggs, leaves to feed growing caterpillars, places to support a cocoon (sometimes over the winter) as well as water and nectar for the butterfly. Many species can use a variety of “host” plants while others such as the Monarch butterfly will use the same plant for all these needs. Host plants are often trees and/or shrubs.
- Include overlapping flowering periods in the garden in order to provide food (nectar, pollen, leaves) throughout the season. Remember trees, particularly oaks, are excellent host plants and typically bloom earlier than many of our flowering perennials. Clustered groupings of 1 perennial species are better than scattered distribution.
- Avoid use of systemic pesticides and are tolerant of “bugs” in the garden. Don’t be too quick to kill off the caterpillar you see munching on a leaf. It could just well turn into something beautiful!



Spicebush Swallowtail Larvae Copyright © 2013 ALuebben



www.ohio-nature.com/image-files/spicebush-swallowtail.jpg

References:

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