

## **Post Rock Answers**

**By Cassie Thiessen April 14, 2023**

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### **Gardening for Pollinators**

Spring is finally here! Soon our gardens and landscapes will be green and colorful. If you are still planning your landscape for the season, you might think about incorporating an area for pollinators. Because of declining bee and monarch butterfly populations, planting a garden for pollinators is increasing in popularity. If you would like to attract pollinators to your garden here are some helpful tips.

The first step is to decide what pollinators you want to bring to your garden. Bees, butterflies and birds will all have different needs and might prefer different plants. The host plants for the caterpillar may or may not be the same preferred host for the adult moth or butterfly. Different birds will need different nectar sources. Using a variety of plant material that vary in blooming times of day and year helps attract a diverse group of visitors. It is best to plant groups or masses of one type of plant; a single plant is difficult for a butterfly to detect. If trying to attract a certain species of butterfly, learn which plants that butterfly prefers, and then emphasize that plant in your landscape.

Annuals that attract butterflies include ageratum, cosmos, French marigold, petunia, verbena and zinnia. Perennials and shrubs can be split into those that bloom early, mid-season and late. Good choices for those that bloom early are allium, chives, forget-me-not and lilac. Bee balm, butterfly bush, black-eyed Susan, buttonbush, butterfly weed, daisy, daylily, gaillardia, lavender, sunflower and veronica are fitting picks for mid-season bloom. Late bloomers include aster, glossy abelia and sedum.

Almost all pollinators need three things; food, shelter and liquids, if you have these elements in your garden, pollinators are sure to come back all summer long. Butterflies are cold-blooded and like open areas where they can sun themselves on cool days and shade to cool off when the sun is too intense. Butterflies prefer a sunny location that is protected from the wind. The ideal area will receive at least six hours of sun a day and is sheltered by a tree, shrub windbreak, fence, or wall. Trees in the area also offer butterflies places to roost and provide protection from storms and predators. Add a few light-colored stones protected from the wind on

which the butterflies can bask in the sun. Provide a "puddling" space by burying a shallow container of sand and keeping it moist. The butterflies will congregate on damp sand to extract needed salts and minerals.

Proper application of insecticides can be a useful tool in maintaining vegetable gardens and ornamental landscapes. However, misuse or improper application timing can have negative effects on beneficial insects, such as pollinators. Do not spray chemicals while fruits flower to protect pollinators such as honeybees. If you must use a pesticide, use the least-toxic material possible. Read labels carefully before purchasing, as many pesticides are especially dangerous for bees. Spray at night when bees and other pollinators are not active.

Spring is the perfect time to get into the garden and try out new plants. Adding flowers will not only make your landscape colorful, it will help the pollinators. If you have questions about creating a pollinator garden, contact your local extension office.

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