

More Pollinators, Please!

CULTIVATING A POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN

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As parents, nurturing a love for nature in our children goes hand in hand with instilling the values of taking care of our environment. This includes an often-overlooked collection of creatures called pollinators. These tiny champions hold the key to a sustainable and thriving ecosystem, which impacts not only our gardens but also the food on our tables and the diversity of our landscapes.

BEES, BUTTERFLIES, BIRDS & BATS!

These pollinators are the superheroes in our healthy natural surroundings; they pollinate plants and ensure the reproduction of fruits, vegetables, and flowers.

How It Works (taken from the *Eden Project*¹)

Pollination: Insects help plants make seeds by transferring pollen between flowering plants of the same type.

1. The bright colours and smell of that flower tell me that it has the sugary nectar I love to eat and the pollen I feed to my kids. Yum!
2. Oh my, while eating at this flower, some of the pollen rubbed off on me by accident!
3. At this second flower, the pollen from the first flower will fertilize the egg cells to make seeds.

Top: Cavan / Depositphotos.com



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POLLINATOR SPECIES ARE AT RISK

Habitats are being disrupted by urban expansion, pesticide use, and climate change; however, our families can help. We have the power to make a significant impact on the preservation of our pollinators. Even if these individual actions feel small, our combined efforts can substantially increase the amount of habitat and resources pollinators desperately need.

Ways to Help

1. Transform your backyard or your balcony into a pollinator haven with native flowers and plants. Planting native flowers to attract these creatures will provide them with the food and shelter they need to thrive.

Not all flowers are created equal, however—at least, not in the eyes (and antenna for smelling) of pollinators. It's important to think about the kinds of flowers we put in our community gardens, parks, and backyards. Green space is precious, especially in urban centres, and the flowers we choose can have a big impact on the survival of important pollinators.

Bees, for example, love lavender and other plants in the mint family such as bee balm and salvia. They also like many herbs including clover, rosemary, basil, oregano, sage, and marjoram, to name a few. Plan to have trees and flowers (again, native species if possible) that bloom at different times all through the seasons from March to October. In this way, pollinators can always find food when they need it.²

Don't pull all of your weeds! Weeds and wildflowers are great for bees and other pollinators. Those big, golden dandelions that people hate popping up in their lawns—bees love them. Ask your parents if you can leave at least a few of them to grow. Many small solitary bees live in the soil just under the surface. If you do have to do some weeding, pull the weeds out carefully, but don't dig into the soil because you could damage the bees' nests if present.

Just like people, bees and insects like to drink as well as eat. Plant kale, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts in your vegetable garden. These plants gather shallow pools of water in their leaves. Can you spot a thirsty bee or butterfly coming by for a visit?

2. Contribute to research using citizen science. Get involved with pollinator citizen science through surveys and stewardship action. Log your pollinator sightings on platforms like *iNaturalist*, *Mission Monarch*, *eButterfly*, and *Bumblebee Watch*.

Citizen science is a great hands-on learning tool to get your family involved in real science and helps us learn new things about the world around us. Host a community data collection event to collect information on the abundance and diversity of bees, wasps, and butterflies in green spaces in your local area. By cataloging our pollinators from coast to coast, we can begin to make informed decisions and provide effective habitat support. [epa.gov](https://www.epa.gov)

For references visit [ecoparent.ca/EXTRAS/SPR24](https://www.ecoparent.ca/EXTRAS/SPR24)

FUN FACTS ABOUT Pollinators

- » When visiting flowers, bumblebees vibrate their wings at a special frequency that shakes the flowers the perfect way to release pollen. This is called buzz pollination.
- » Have you ever heard of the waggle dance? It's the vibrating dance honeybees do for others in their colony to show where they can find flowers.



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The Exploration Club for Families... NatureKids BC helps children get outdoors to play, imagine and explore in nearby nature. Join a family nature club near you or become a free-range member. Find out more at www.naturekidsbc.ca. If you are already a member you can use this activity as part of your Action Awards Quest!

