Pollinator Garden Project

Why a Pollinator Garden?

Did you know that animal pollinators are needed for the reproduction of 90% of flowering plants, one third of human food crops, and they are critical to the health of our native ecosystems? We all know about honey bees, but many other animals are important pollinators, including native bumbles bees, solitary bees, butterflies, moths, birds, bats, beetles, and flies.

Many of our pollinator species are in steep decline, especially our domestic and native bee populations. Our bees are threatened by habitat loss, disease and excessive and inappropriate use of pesticides.

There are many ways we can help to bring back and sustain healthy populations of pollinators:

- Plant pollinator friendly plants, especially native species
- Transform unused areas of lawns and fields into pollinator gardens and meadows
- Avoid the use of pesticides

Creating a Pollinator Garden

The Pike Township Environmental Advisory Council is establishing a pollinator garden in the Weidner Grove Park. The garden will contain a diverse range of native plants, providing a season long source of nectar and pollen for many pollinator species. These are the stages you will see this garden go through as it develops.

1. Initial Site Preparation - To prepare the site we reduce the weed pressure so the new garden can get established. Old field vegetation is removed, the soil is loosened with a tiller and broad fork, and a series of cover crops are planted. Cover crops smother weed seedlings and add organic matter to the soil.

2. Cover Crops - Buckwheat is planted as a summer cover crop as it grows quickly in warm weather. The flowers are also a good source of nectar and pollen for bees.

Help Bring Back Our Pollinators!

Pike Township Environmental Advisory Council

We can thank our bees for the pollination of:

apples, beets, beans, blueberries, broccoli, cabbage, celery, cranberries, cherries, cucumbers, onions, pears, peas, peppers, pumpkins, soybeans, strawberries, squash, tomatoes, walnuts, watermelons, many more food crops, and flowers.

Domestic honey bees pollinate about $10 billion worth of crops in the US each year.

After the buckwheat blooms, it is mowed and winter wheat is planted. Winter wheat will grow in the fall and go dormant over the winter providing a protective covering for the soil. In the spring the young wheat will green up and grow vigorously. In May or June, the wheat is cut and incorporated into the soil and a second cover crop of buckwheat is planted.

3. Establishing the Pollinator Garden Plants
In the fall, the 2nd buckwheat cover crop is cut and incorporated into the soil after flowering. A meadow seed mix that includes native warm season grasses and pollinator friendly wildflowers is broadcast seeded. Some of the seeds will germinate in the fall with the young plants going dormant over the winter, giving them a head start the following spring. Other seeds will germinate in the spring and develop through the summer.

4. Maintenance - As the native plants are getting established some weeding may be needed. Ongoing maintenance includes periodic mowing and selective weeding of non-native plants.

5. Adding Established Native Perennials
The hedgerow adjacent to the meadow provides important cover and nesting habitat for pollinators. To enhance this desirable habitat native perennial plants and shrubs are planted in and along this hedgerow.

Donations of native perennials are welcome !

Pollinator Color Preferences

Bees prefer bright white, yellow, blue and ultra violet colored flowers (bees cannot see red).

Butterflies prefer bright colored flowers including red, orange and purple.

Hummingbirds prefer red and orange tubular flowers.

To make one pound of honey, domestic honey bee workers in a hive must fly 55,000 miles and tap two million flowers.

In a single collecting trip, a worker bee will visit between 50 and 100 flowers and return to the hive carrying over half her weight in pollen and nectar.

Buckwheat
Fast Growing Cover Crop for Pollinators

Buckwheat provides pollen and nectar for honey bees and many other native pollinators. Bees produce a delicious dark honey from buckwheat nectar.

Pennsylvania German farmers have used buckwheat as a cover crop since the 18th century.

Buckwheat is not a true grain; it is in the sorrel and rhubarb family.

Buckwheat is used for pancakes, scrapple, and even gluten free beer.

Pollinator Information

www.pollinator.org

www.xerces.org/bumblebees/

www.greatsunflower.org

Pike Township Environmental Advisory Council

We can help Pike Township residents with:

- plant and animal identification
- habitat protection and restoration
- educational programs
- land preservation assistance
- stream protection and more

If you are interested in donating plants or helping with the work of the Pike Township EAC, please email Jeff Zehr, EAC Chairman, at jzehr@piketownship.org.