

Michigan Pollinator Garden

Michigan is a major agriculture/floriculture producer for the nation and every bite of food is dependent upon pollinators either directly or indirectly. Much has been publicized about the honey bee (imported by European settlers), but there are over 450 native bees in Michigan that are pollinators, too. Researchers report that native bees, when present, increase honey bees' effectiveness. Butterflies, moths, beetles, and even the hummingbird are also pollinators.

Many gardeners plant pretty flowers in their flower beds, hanging baskets, and containers, but we cannot forget to include food (e.g., parsley, fennel, dill, broccoli, cabbage, etc.) for the pollinators' chopping/chewing caterpillars/larva. Incorporating these into a flower plantings can be very attractive. Some pollinators are most at home in the tree canopy so one may wish to select their trees and shrubs accordingly. One may wish to select plants most familiar to pollinators, such as native plants.

Gardeners often reach for pesticides to kill those pests, but unfortunately pollinator babies may be killed, too. To protect pollinators, gardeners may wish to use "safe-for-pollinator" practices, such as eliminate the use of pesticides and providing over-winter protection. To protect human food crops, physical barriers may be used over non-flowering plants (e.g., cabbage/broccoli) to help prevent egg-laying by pollinators. Gardeners know that birds in their gardens help to control pests—their babies need that protein. Yes, they may eat pollinators, too, but gardeners have stated that after a couple of years, the garden seems to reach equilibrium.

It's time for Michigan to increase greater awareness of the vital role of **all** pollinators and to that end Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc. (MGC's) major initiative is to help raise awareness not only by encouraging our 5500+ members to carpet the great State of Michigan with Michigan pollinator gardens, but to educate the public and to encourage others to plant pollinator gardens, too.