The Importance of Pollinators
Agriculture In Lancaster County

The ag industry brings upwards of 4 billion dollars into the local economy annually, making Lancaster one of the most productive agricultural centers in the nation. The success of the ag industry means the success of Lancaster’s economy and, more importantly, its culture and community. For this reason, it is critical that we, as a community, work to support agriculture in Lancaster as best we can.

What are Pollinators?

Pollinators are responsible for transferring pollen from one flower to another for fertilization. They include a variety of animals including most notably bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and beetles. This step allows for the development of many fruits and vegetables and supplies the seeds for the next generation of plants.

Pollinators and Agriculture

Some locally grown crops, such as blueberries and cherries, are more than 90% dependent on animal pollinators. Even in crops that are capable of self pollination, animal pollinators increase the genetic diversity and general strength and robustness of the crop. A healthy pollinator population results in a healthier crop and increased yields.

Check out the complete guide to native pollinator gardens on the F&M website!

Works Cited


A general guide to the importance of native pollinator gardens in supporting our native bee and butterfly populations in Lancaster County
The Purpose of Native Pollinator Gardens

Pollinator Populations in Danger

Recently the European honey bee, far and away the most important insect pollinator for the pollination of domesticated crops, has experienced a dramatic reduction in population due to an epidemic known as Colony Collapse Disorder, or CCD, likely caused by overuse of pesticides on agricultural fields. Native pollinators such as bees and butterflies are capable of fully pollinating crops, however the use of pesticides and monocropping has reduced their habitat and put their populations in danger.

Why Grow a Native Pollinator Garden?

Growing a native pollinator garden will help expand native pollinator habitat and allow their populations to grow while bringing them in close proximity to crops in need of pollination. In turn this will reduce dependence on the european honey bee, support native species and habitats, and cut agricultural costs.

Why native, Why Organic, Why Polycropping

Local pollinators have evolved over millennia to seek out and depend on the plants of their native habitats, and in addition, many butterfly species utilize very specific native wildflowers as their caterpillar host plants. The use of pesticides can repel native insect pollinators and can dramatically reduce the health of a colony from chemically induced disease. Finally, polycropping provides consistent sources of nectar and pollen for native pollinators throughout the year.

How to Best Cultivate Your Native Pollinator Garden

1. Find Your Region: The best way to attract native pollinators is with native plants, so the first step to creating your native pollinator garden is to Determine which plants are native to your region. Using a field guide or even a simple Internet search is sure to provide plenty of options!

2. Establish Your Soil Type: Test your soil for its acidity, nutrient content, and drainage in order to ensure you are selecting plants that with thrive your soil conditions. You can do this using a soil testing kit from a hardware store.

3. Variety is Key: There is a large variety of pollinators attracted to a variety of plants. Choose plants of different sizes, shapes, colors, and scents as to ensure that your garden contains plants that are attractive and accessible to as many pollinator species as possible.

4. Go Organic: Using organic gardening practices will reduce the threats of Colony Collapse Disorder and prevent repelling the very pollinators you are trying to attract.

5. Host Plants: One way to ensure you are attracting pollinators is to use the native host plants for butterflies, such as milkweed for Monarchs.

6. Pro Tips: Include old dead wood or pieces of lumber with holes drilled inside to provide a nesting area for native bees. Providing overripe or rotting fruits will help in attracting butterflies, and supplying sugar water in a hummingbird feeder will bring hummingbirds to your garden in droves.

Native Pollinator Plants

Some plants native to Lancaster County and great way to start planning your native pollinator garden.

Wild Flowers:
Aster, Black-eyed Susan, Butterfly weed, Common milkweed, Field goldenrod, Foxglove beardtongue, Golden ragwort, Purple coneflower, Hollyhock, Mallows, Sunflower, Swamp milkweed, Violets, Tall verbena, Threadleaf coreopsis, Woodland phlox, Blue eyed grass, Spiderwort

Herbs:
Dill, Fennel, Parsley, Mountain mint

Shrubs:
Alumroot, Coontie, False Indigo, Spicebush, Culver’s Root, Meadowsweet, Trumpet honeysuckle, Wild petunia, Turtle head

Trees:
Aspen, Cherry, Flowering Dogwood, Eastern Redbud, Common Pawpaw, Poplar, Prickly Ash, Sassafras, Sweet Bay, Willow, Witch Hazel

Additional Resources

Franklin and Marshall College - Native Pollinator Garden Guide
Pennsylvania Native Plant Society
Pennsylvania Plant Database
Lancaster Conservancy Native Species Gardens With Wings - Butterfly Host Plants