



The Real Dirt

May, 2011

Attracting Pollinators: Bees, Butterflies and Birds

Ninety percent of plants depend on cross-pollination and it is essential in keeping the botanical gene pool healthy and varied. This tricky work is done by some of the hardest working little creatures on the planet: bees, butterflies and birds.

Essentially it involves transferring pollen from the male parts (stamen) to the female parts (pistils). As responsible gardeners we must provide the right environment for this to happen. Without our efforts habitat loss, fragmentation, pesticides, pollution, introduction of exotic species and human ignorance are putting pollinators in danger.



We need to provide early, mid and late season blooms to provide a continuing food

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source. Plants should be placed in somewhat-crowded plant repetitive groups for easy detection. There should be diversity in plant material – especially wild meadow, prairie or native plants. They should support the complete life cycles of as many pollinators as possible. Nesting sites need to provide shelter from weather and predators, a water source and somewhere to over-winter.

To increase the pollinators to our gardens we need to reduce chemical use. Products such as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) can harm butterfly larvae.

Bees are the most common pollinators and their stats are impressive. A single bee can visit 2000 flowers per day. To attract bees to your garden plant single-flowered blue, yellow and purple plants with sweet scents. The scent molecule in flowers attract bees from over 1000 meters, pollution takes it down to 200 or less. Leave some mulch free areas as many native bees nest in the soil.

Nothing says summer better than a beautiful butterfly flitting from flower to flower in your garden on a sunny day. Butterflies respond to the colour and shape of a flower. They prefer blue, orange and red single flowers or trumpet and tube-shaped flowers. Moths are attracted to pale or white flowers that bloom after dark. Caterpillars look for food in several common host plants such as Columbine,

Milkweed, Indigo, Turtlehead, Meadow Sage, Sedum and Petunia to name a few. Full-grown butterflies prefer sunny areas and wind protection. If the temperature falls below 16 degrees they are unable to fly.



The best known pollinator amongst the birds is of course the hummingbird. Don't worry about supplying fragrant flowers to attract Hummingbirds. They have no sense of smell but taste with their feet! Hummingbirds respond readily to colour, mostly red but also orange and pink and are attracted to tubular shapes, single blossoms and clusters. If you are feeding any birds keep feeders clean, provide a small patch of sand or grit to aid in their digestion and supply fresh water.

We need to take care of our pollinators and appreciate them for the hard work they do. Not only are they responsible for the plants in our gardens. In Canada \$1.2 billion worth of produce a year depends on pollinators. We are dependent on these tiny, hardworking creatures.

*Linda Peacock
Master Gardener*



Master Gardeners of Simcoe County

May TO DO List

- Begin to harden off houseplants before taking them outside
- Work compost into the ground removing weeds as you go, prepare for planting next month
- Dethatch lawn if more than 2cm (3/4") deep
- Move perennials that didn't have enough space last winter.
- Prune all late summer-flowering shrubs and old perennial growth.
- Divide perennials that bloom in mid-summer.
- Avoid walking on your lawn and garden as the ground starts to thaw. The soil is saturated with moisture and will compact very easily.
- Have a gardening question or need to identify a plant or pest, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).
- Plant peas, carrots, beets, leaf lettuce, potatoes, radishes, spinach, onions.

Garden Humour:

The real meaning of Plant Catalog terminology:

"A favourite of birds" means to avoid planting near cars, sidewalks, or clotheslines.

Where to find us for free gardening advice!

ONGOING:

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca

- monitored daily
- send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

SPEAKING EVENTS

May 17th, 2011 Master Gardener Meeting, 7.00 pm

The White Pine Boardroom,
2284 Nursery Rd. Midhurst

May 25th, 2011 Spring Ephemerals and other Forest Treasures: 7.00pm

Speaker Cherin Harris-Tuck,
Cookstown Library,
20 Church St. Cookstown

June 1st, 2011 Pick Smart Presentation: 7.00 pm

Unusual Edible Plants: Tom McCavour,
Party Poopers or Twelve Unwelcome Plants: Marie-Laure Varcoe,
Made in the Shade : Charlotte Vorstermans,
Wasaga Beach Garden Club, Wasaga Beach United Church,
380 Zoo Park Road, Wasaga Beach

June 8th, 2011, Made in the Shade: 7.00pm

Speaker Charlotte Vorstermans,
Lakeshore Library,
967 Innisfil Beach Road Innisfil

July 6th, 2011, Alternatives to Pesticides: 10.30 am

Speaker Carol Dunk,
Stroud Library, 7883 Yonge Street, Innisfil

COMING EVENTS

May 17th, 2011 Master Gardener Meeting 7.00pm

The White Pine Boardroom
2284 Nursery Rd. Midhurst

June 15th, 2011 Health and Information Fair for Mature Adults 9.30 am to 3.00pm

The Wasaga Countrylife Cottage and RV Resort
85 Theme Park Road, Wasaga Beach

Ask a Master Gardener books containing answers to your most common gardening questions are available at any of these speaking engagements for only \$10 or Gardening Guides for only \$1. Valuable references for you or as gifts for a gardening friend! Either e-mail jonbon@bell.net to order or call 705-436-5292



For information on arranging a lecture for your group please contact Joan Neiman-Agapas 705-721-9088. For more information on Master Gardeners, visit our website: and follow the links to

Simcoe County Master Gardeners.

