Benefits of Pollinator Gardens

Pollinator gardens benefit the entire ecosystem, including humans, wild animals and insects. As a bonus, they attract fanciful creatures to your gardens, help local beekeepers and beautify your grounds. In addition to beautification, adding a pollinator garden to your borders, parking lot medians, water gardens and other hard-to-mow places can provide nice sitting areas around benches, are easy to maintain once established, and are typically less expensive than other flowering gardens. You'll also find that neighbors and parishioners frequently "exchange" native plant starts and seeds, so it's a great way to make connections in your community.

A pollinator garden is designed to attract and support a variety of species, including bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. These plants include annuals, which only live for one season before dying, and perennials, which come back every year. Shrubs and bushes can also act as pollinator plants.

Pollination occurs when an insect, bird, mammal or even wind takes pollen from the male part of a flower to the female part of a flower, fertilizing the plant. The pollination process is necessary for crops that sustain all human and animal life. In fact, living pollinators are responsible for 75% of our food supply.

Insect pollinator populations have experienced a 20 to 40% decline in recent years. We can help reverse that decline by planting pollinator gardens in our homes and on community grounds.

Small but Mighty

Pollinators serve as inspiration for all of us to do what we can to make a difference. Bees are among the tiniest of our animal friends, but around the world, they are responsible for a third of the world's food production. Teaching about the global impact of their small acts reminds us that together we can, and must, do the same. The climate crisis simmers against a global backdrop of conflict, high food and energy prices, inflation and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2030, Episcopal Relief & Development aims to equip 30,000 community-based climate resilience change agents and strengthen coping mechanisms of 150,000 households across 300 communities globally. You can learn more about this strategy and how to support the work here.

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Six Steps to a Successful Pollinator Garden

1. Find the Right Spot

You need an area that receives plenty of sunshine. A local nursery or garden expert can offer suggestions for the best mix of sun and shade. You also want to create a timeline for the project so that you're planting during the optimum season.

2. Variety Is Best

Pollinator gardens depend upon blooming plants attracting bees and other pollinators. Make sure to have a variety of plants that will bloom at different times of the year.

3. Prep the Soil

It's always helpful to start by getting your soil tested. (Local extension offices are good places to go for the tests). The results can help you determine if you need to add certain nutrients. If you're planting in a raised garden bed, use soil for flowering plants because it will include some of these important nutrients

4. Water

Plants need water, especially when they're trying to get rooted into the ground. Consider either a rotation of manually watering plants or, if the church can afford it, install an irrigation system.

5. Maintain and Monitor

As with any growing thing, gardens need regular attention. In addition to watering, you'll need to weed regularly this might be a good time to launch a "Lay Weeder" program. Avoid using pesticides since they can also harm the pollinators.

6. Be Patient and Persistent

Not everyone has a green thumb, but we're convinced that through trial and error, you can cultivate a pollinator garden. Keep trying!