

We can help pollinators

All the seven steps listed here will benefit the pollinating insects and the ecosystem service they provide. Parks, gardens, allotments; they can be applied in many places.

1. Plant pollinator-friendly flowers

A diverse flora benefits bees and other insects. Bees need nutrition from early spring to late autumn. The first flowers that bees visit are crocus, spring onion and scilla. Other flowers such as hazel and willow also provide an early rich food source. Later in the season, bees visit dandelions and white clover. It is important to not cut the grass, so these flowers can establish and grow. If you grow herbs, especially turmeric, lavender, oregano and thyme, bees will also visit them. During peak summer, when raspberries and blackberries bloom, the bees are happy. In the late summer, asters are beautiful and rich in nectar. Lime trees are visited by bees and bumblebees: you can hear buzzing sounds of thousands of bees when standing under a linden tree at the end of July.

Insects and other animals spread the seeds of flowers and help with fertilization. This interaction contributes to a rich diversity of plant species. When you buy seeds and plants, ask in the store which plants serve our pollinators.

2. Leave areas to grow wild

Let green areas grow naturally, so different plant species can proliferate - such as nettles, thistles and dandelions which are important for different pollinators and butterfly larvae. Insects appreciate undisturbed areas, where plants grow wild.

3. Do not cut the grass too low or too often

Close-cut lawns are not valuable for insects, so think about cutting grass less often and setting the blades higher. This will allow low-growing flowers to establish in the grass, such as white clover, dandelions and common self-heal. Areas under fruit trees should not be cut because they provide favorable habitats for pollinators.

4. Do not use pesticides

Pollinators are adversely affected by pesticides, for example the honeybee, *Apis mellifera*, may lose its orientation ability. None-organic pesticides are one of the causes for decline of the bee population in many countries. In addition, pesticides can move through the food web as birds and other animals that feed on insects become affected.

If you need to remove weeds or pest think about other methods, such as solutions that contain nature-based products that dissolve after use. In general, avoid any spraying during the flowering season.

5. Set up an insect hotel or rent a bee hive.

Insect hotels can be purchased at plant stores or easily made. You can drill holes of different sizes in firewood, from 5 to 20mm, at a depth of 20cm, or tie a bundle of bamboo sticks together and hang it from a branch or balcony. If there is a tree stump in the yard, drill holes into the stump.

6. Let dead wood remain.

Many pollinators live inside the bark of trees and tree cavities. There are also insects that need dead wood for their life cycle. Think about leaving branches and trees lying on the ground even if it looks unsightly.

7. Make bare earth available.

70% of wild bee species make their nests in the ground and overwinter in the ground. To create bee habitat, remove grass to expose the bare ground or build south-facing sandbanks. It is best if ground surfaces face the south.