KPOV – *The Point*

Gardening: Get Good at It

“12 Plants to Entice Pollinators to Your Garden”

September 7, 2021

Bring pollinator buzz and beauty to your garden with a rich variety of native and ornamental flowering plants.

"Floral abundance is one of the strongest ways to promote bee diversity in gardens and a showy blend of flowers can charm birds and butterflies as well," said Gail Langellotto, the statewide coordinator for the Oregon State University Extension Service's Master Gardener program.

"Native plants are fantastic hosts for butterfly larvae, which are completely dependent on them to reproduce," she explained. "For example, there's a call for gardeners to plant more native milkweed, which is the host plant for migratory monarch butterflies. Without milkweed, monarchs can't complete their life cycle."

Exotic ornamentals play a key role as well. According to Langellotto, adult bees are much more indiscriminate than we previously thought and have been found to feed on the nectar and pollen of these plants quite a bit.

In Central Oregon, there are many plants that draw a pollinator crowd but also need less water once established.

Champion perennials include:

* **Lavender -** Fragrant lavender-blue spikeslurebumblebees and carpenter, digger and leafcutting bees.
* **Gayfeather or Blazing Star** - Striking neon-colored spike-like blooms are magnets for a variety of bees, butterflies and birds.
* **Catmint -** Early and then later season rebloom flowersentice bumblebees and honey, carder and mason bees.

Three standout annuals are:

* **Zinnia –** Thewide array of colorful blossoms beckon hummingbirds, butterflies and bees.
* **Sunflowers -** Bright flowersattract longhorn, sweat and leafcutting bees and bumblebees.
* **Cosmos -** Their summer-longcloud of color draws bees, butterflies and birds.

Magnet shrubs include:

* **Butterfly Bushes -** Though sometimes difficult to establish in Central Oregon,theyare known for their nectar-rich, fragrant blooms that attract bees, butterflies and later in the season, birds.
* **Abelia -** Trumpet-shaped flowers entice butterflies and hummingbirds. Blooming from late-summer through mid-autumn, Abelia provide nectar at a critical time for migrating pollinators.
* **Blue Mist or Bluebeard Spirea –** These gems offer shelter to adult and larval butterflies and moths while their late summer flowers support bees and hummingbirds.
* **Ocean spray -** This native shrub is a larval host for various butterflies and its nectar draws bumblebees and a variety of small native bees.
* **Serviceberry -** Another native, it entices hummingbirds, bees and butterflies and serves as larval host for several butterfly species.
* **Russian sage -** Lavender-blue flowers lure hummingbirds, honey bees and small carpenter and leafcutting bees.

If you are gardening for pollinators, Langellotto advises against using broad-spectrum insecticides, particularly on plants that are in bloom, as they can kill or harm a variety of "good" insects in addition to the target pest. Systemic pesticides are also ill-advised. When mixed with water and poured on the soil around the base of a plant, they can kill or harm insects for months or years to come, she explained.

“If you’re having an insect issue, consult with your local OSU Extension office for options. Many plants are able to do just fine with some insect damage. Sometimes, it’s just a matter of adjusting our expectations and accepting some natural imperfection," Langellotto said.

To learn more about gardening for pollinators, don’t miss the OSU’s **Growing Gardeners – Level Up Series** class “Gardening with Native Plants for Pollinators” on September 14th, All classes are online and free.

For more information on this or any other gardening topic, call the Master Gardeners at 541-548-6088 or go to our website [www.gocomga.com](http://www.gocomga.com) and click on the KPOV tab on the orange bar. This has been Gardening: Get Good at It on KPOV, The Point.

**Resources:**

Detweiler, Amy Jo, (2020). “Water-wise Gardening in Central Oregon,” [**https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9136**](https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9136) (Accessed February 2021)

Oregon State University Extension, “12 Plants to Entice Pollinators to Your Garden”,

[**https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/12-plants-entice-pollinators-your-garden**](https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/12-plants-entice-pollinators-your-garden). (Accessed June 2021)

OSU’s **Growing Gardeners – Level Up Series** class “Gardening with Native Plants for Pollinators” (<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/growing-oregon-gardeners-level-series>).