



Blooming Cafés

Reading page for Pollinators week 2: Who are the pollinators?

Do you have a favorite food? What do you like about it? Do you like the way it looks? Do you like the way it smells? Or is your favorite thing about it the way it tastes? Did you know that just like you, pollinators have favorite foods too?

Pollinators are animals like bees and butterflies that help plants move pollen from one flower to another flower. This helps them make their fruit and seeds. Pollinators need flowers too. Flowers provide pollinators with food. Pollinators drink the sugar-filled nectar and eat the protein- and vitamin-rich pollen that flowers make.

Since there are lots of blooming plants out there, how does a plant make sure that pollinators will visit their flowers and move their pollen?

Think about some of the ways restaurants and grocery stores get you to buy food products. Do they put it in a pretty package? Do they make sure it smells good? Are they open during the hours you are awake and hungry?

In addition to the nectar and pollen they make, flowers have developed special traits to help attract pollinators to them, such as the colors, patterns, and shapes of their petals, the time of day they are open, and even the smell they give off. These traits act like advertisements to encourage pollinators to come visit them. Here are some examples of pollinators and their favorite flowers:

Bees like yellow, blue and purple flowers. Because they have small tongues for sipping nectar, they like tiny flowers that grow in groups best.

Butterflies like bright colors, so they're attracted to red, orange, yellow, pink, and blue flowers. They like to sit on the flower while they drink the nectar, so they like flowers that have a wide top that can serve as a landing pad.

Moths and **bats** are out looking for food at night. They are attracted to white and light-colored flowers that smell sweet and fruity.

Beetles do not always fly much, so they like bowl-shaped flowers that they can crawl around and sit in. Sometimes they eat the petals and other flower parts too!

Hummingbirds are really attracted to the color red, and their long beaks fit well in tube-shaped flowers. They use a lot of energy flying so they also look for flowers that have lots of nectar to drink.

Flies like green and white flowers. They also like flowers that give off stinky odors that smell like rotting meat. Yuck!

So next time you notice a pretty flower or take a moment to smell its scent, remember that there is purpose behind these appealing qualities. Just like a cool box design or a prize inside might get you to try a breakfast cereal, the flower is working hard to get the pollinator to try their nectar and pollen so that without knowing it, they also help the flower make its seeds.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. How do pollinators help plants?

- A. They water plants.
- B. They provide plants with food.
- C. They move pollen from one flower to another flower.
- D. None of the above.

2. How do flowers help pollinators?

- A. They provide them with shelter.
- B. They provide them with food.
- C. They look pretty.
- D. Flowers do not help pollinators.

3. What traits of flowers help them attract the attention of pollinators?

- A. Scent
- B. Color of petals
- C. Shape of the flower
- D. Pollen and nectar available
- E. All of the above

4. True or false, pollinators have favorite flowers?

5. Cactus plants have white flowers that smell sweet and bloom at night. What kind of pollinators do you think would be attracted to a cactus flower?