



Helping our Pollinator Friends

Reading page for Week 4: How can we help pollinators?

Pollinators help us in so many ways. As they gather nectar and pollen for their diet, they move pollen from one flower to another flower. This process, called pollination, helps plants make their seeds. New seeds mean new plants! New plants mean we will continue to be surrounded by these amazing green living things that make oxygen for our air, provide food for our tables, give us shelter, and help keep our soil healthy and our water clean. We need plants and so we need pollinators!

Scientists who study pollinators have noticed that the numbers of pollinators in our ecosystems are decreasing. They think this is due to a number of reasons, including:

- Pollinators are losing their homes! When we clear natural spaces to build houses, businesses, and roads, we are kicking them out of their homes and taking away their food sources. Pollinators need space to build nests and also lots of flowering plants to collect food from.
- Pollution is not good for pollinators! Many of our actions change the chemicals in the air, water, and soil and that can hurt pollinators.

- When we kill what we consider bad insects and pests, we can kill good ones too! Sometimes humans apply sprays called pesticides to kill insects that are damaging our favorite garden plants, crops, or lawn areas and these chemicals can also hurt the pollinators in our environment — even if they are not the insects we are trying to remove.
- Just like us, pollinators can get sick! Although different than the ones that hurt us, pollinators can catch viruses and be impacted by bacteria and parasites just like people.
- Weather is changing. When weather changes over long periods of time it is called climate change. Our planet is experiencing changes in average temperatures and rainfall. This is impacting where many of our pollinators can live and the timing of their life cycles.

Pollinators are in trouble and if things don't change, plants that rely on pollinators to make their seeds are going to be in trouble too. The good news is that we can help. Here are some examples of ways people can help:

- Add lots of different kinds of blooming plants to your yard. Make sure there are flowers available to be a food source for pollinators from spring through fall. Local pollinators especially like plants that are native to your area.
- Encourage people in your community to leave areas of uncut grass and wildflower patches at homes, in local parks, and in other greenspaces. This will provide homes and food for pollinators. Remember that some pollinators like butterflies might have specific types of plants that they need when they are in their caterpillar forms too.
- Encourage grownups to avoid using pesticides that may hurt our pollinator friends by accident.
- Finally, spread the word! Find ways to teach others about how important pollinators are in our world.

As much as pollinators do for us each day, we need to make sure to remember to help them too!

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. List one of the reasons pollinators are important to humans:

2. The numbers of pollinators in our world is:
 - A. Increasing
 - B. Decreasing
 - C. Staying the same

3. Which of the following is not a reason pollinator population numbers are changing:
 - A. Pollution
 - B. Loss of habitat
 - C. Pesticides
 - D. They are being eaten by birds and other predators in larger numbers
 - E. Disease

4. Why do pollinators need to be able to visit plants with flowers from spring until fall?
 - A. For nectar
 - B. For pollen
 - C. Because they need to eat through the whole growing season
 - D. All of the above

5. How can you help pollinators? List one of the ideas suggested in the reading page or come up with a new idea of your own.