



Over the Garden Fence



Planning and Planting for Pollinators

By Bob Labozetta (UC Master Gardener, Mariposa)

Did you know...bats, bees, beetles, birds, butterflies, flies, moths, and wasps pollinate three-fourths of the plants on earth. Over 180,000 plant species and over 1,200 crops depend on these pollinators.

Yet, many pollinator populations are in decline due to a loss of feeding and nesting habitats, pollution, pesticide use, disease, invasive predators, and changing conditions. The decline of pollinators poses a significant threat to the world's food supply and, as a result, our own existence. But you can help by creating a pollinator garden with help from UC Davis' Pollen Nation website (<http://ucanr.edu/sites/PollenNation/>).

Select plant varieties with overlapping bloom times from early spring into late fall to provide diverse sources of nectar and pollen. Choose at least 20 different varieties (or fewer if the types of plants are highly attractive to pollinators). Include night-blooming flowers to attract moths and bats.

Design your garden to help pollinators find you. Plant your garden in clumps, rather than just single plants. Large patches of flowers attract pollinators. Arrange your plants with the taller plants near the back and the smaller ones in front. Hummingbird feeders offer the scent of artificial nectar to attract hummingbirds to your site. Use four parts water to one part table sugar (never honey, artificial sweeteners or fruit juices).

Include native plants that are adapted to your local climate and soil to attract native pollinators. Contact the UC Master Gardener Helpline for a list of native plants in the Mariposa area.

Plant in the sun. Bees prefer to visit flowers in the sun, so attract pollinators to the sunniest areas of your garden.

Reduce or eliminate pesticide use in your landscape and incorporate plants that attract beneficial insects for pest control. Pesticides may kill beneficial insects like bees, ladybugs, and predators of garden pests.

Leave some areas for nesting bees to build their nests. Leave part of your garden un-mulched for ground-nesting insects to dwell.

Leave a few dead tree trunks and branches for wood-nesting bees and beetles. You can also build a bee condo by drilling holes of varying diameters 3 to 5 inches deep in scrap lumber and mount it to a post or under eaves.

Provide clean water in a shallow dish, bowl, or birdbath with half-submerged stones for perches.

Create a damp salt lick for butterflies and bees. Use a dripping hose or drip irrigation line to create a damp area in the dirt. Mix a small bit of salt or wood ashes into the mud.

UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County are located at 5009 Fairgrounds Rd., Mariposa. For more gardening and event information, visit our website (http://cemariposa.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardener/) and Facebook page (UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County). UC Master Gardeners staff a Helpline serving Mariposa County, including Greeley Hill, Coulterville, and Lake Don Pedro (209-966-7078 or mgmariposa@ucdavis.edu). Listen to us on the radio at KRYZ 98.5 FM on Wednesdays at 2 pm and Saturdays at 5 pm.