

The Great Urban Meadow

How your garden can help pollinators

Gardens provide food, shelter, and water to insect pollinators. What plant species you select and how you manage your garden can have a big impact on the abundance and health of urban pollinators.

Flower Types

Flower structure may restrict access to the nectar to some pollinators, for example long corolla flowers, such as Pentas, may produce copious nectar but are too deep for the short tongues of bees and hover flies. In this case, butterflies with their long tongues can reach the nectar while the short tongue pollinators may only collect pollen.



Most bees and pollinating flies will visit short corolla flowers and daisy type flowers (Family Asteraceae) in which they can easily access nectar and pollen.



Planting native plants can help

There are a number of native Hawaiian plants that can attract pollinators and can easily be introduced to the urban landscape, these include hardy species such as Ohi'a lehua, Naupaka and Ilima.



Pollinators

The most common pollinators found on local gardens fall into three large categories: bees, hover flies, and butterflies. There are many species of bees that visit urban gardens, most of which were introduced to Hawaii. Among the most common are the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*), the much larger and heavier carpenter bee, and several species of leafcutter and sweat bees.



Edible Gardens

Many herb species are also great forage for pollinators, especially honeybees. Mint, sage, rosemary, oregano, and thyme are a few of the many plants that can be used to attract pollinators.

Many crop plants provide ample resources for their insect visitors. Plants in the melon family such as pumpkins and watermelons, are bee dependent and require adequate bee visitation to produce fruits.



Recommendations:

- Use a variety of plants, rather than a single type. This will ensure there is always something in bloom in the garden and you are providing food for a variety of pollinator types.
- Plant the same species in clumps. As a rule, the larger the floral display, the more attractive the patch will be to the pollinators.
- Become familiar with bee friendly plant species.
- Choose plants that are not pest susceptible, to reduce the need for pesticide applications.
- Reduce pesticide use and/or select least toxic materials whenever possible.
- If using pesticides, read labels carefully and apply in the evening when most insects are not active.

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This effort was partially supported by the USDA
National Institute for Food and Agriculture,
Project 16-954