

Help Fuel Our Pollinators

By Molly McCormick



Spring has sprung, the pollinators are migrating, but do

they have enough to eat? Borderlands Restoration and community volunteers have been monitoring flowers on the landscape, and we have noticed a gap in flowers and thus available nectar each year in May and June. Local hummingbird researcher Susan Wethington of the Hummingbird Monitoring Network has observed some nesting hummingbirds abandoning nests during these hot, dry premonsoon months. It looks like lack of food for our pollinator friends could cause this nest abandonment and potentially a decline in populations. These nectar gaps also affect bees, butterflies, bats, and migrating pollinators.

You can help to solve this problem by planting a pollinator garden! Your backyard can be like a gas station—a place for both our resident pollinators and our migrating friends to refuel. Here are a few helpful pollinator garden tips.

Start with shaping the earth. Watch how water flows on

your site, and dig basins to capture water coming off roofs or flowing in from various areas. Check out the new Borderlands Restoration retail space on Third & McKeown for an example.

Group plants. Create a beacon by clustering plants of the same species



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or flower color together. Not only does this make plants easier to find, but pollinators will use less energy by flying shorter distances to obtain nectar.

Create a berm or moat around the plant(s) that extends beyond the canopy of the plant by 1 to 2 feet. Do this especially if you don't have the opportunity to shape earth and dig large basins. Line the edges of the berm with rocks to stabilize if needed.

MULCH! One of the best things you can do for your garden is to mulch with leaves, straw, or other plant material. Mulch allows water to stay in the soil much longer, provides a barrier against weeds or unwanted plants, and acts as a fertilizer. I like to use a few inches of mulch and to top it off with sticks or heavier material so that the mulch doesn't blow away.

Use slow deep watering. Slow watering allows water to seep deeply, encouraging deep root growth. It also permits less watering, which makes your garden easier to manage. Slowly fill the berm, using a slow drip irrigation system or a hose on low flow. Filling the berm with water two to three times each watering is a strategy for seeping water deep into soils

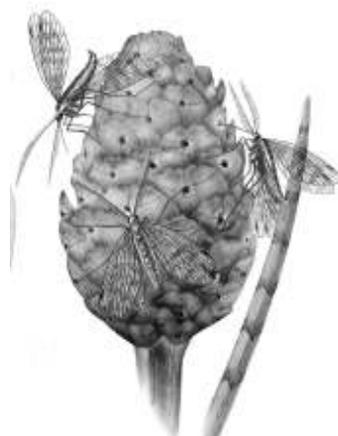
and promoting deep root growth.

Think about habitat for pollinators. Not only is your garden a gas station for pollinators, it can become home too. Brush piles, bare earth for burrowing bees, rock piles, and tree stumps or logs are places where pollinating insects like to dwell. Keep a small basin or pot filled with water for thirsty pollinators. You can purchase nontoxic "mosquito dunks" at your local hardware store to keep mosquito larvae out of your pollinator watering holes.

Avoid pesticides and other chemicals. There is strong evidence that harmful pesticides and herbicides could be a major part of pollinator population decline. Find other ways to mitigate pests—soapy water in a spray bottle works well. Purchase plants from organic nurseries, and ask about the use of chemicals. *Plants grown with chemicals have been shown to kill the pollinators you are trying to help.* You can purchase plants from the Borderlands Restoration retail store—our plants are pollinator safe. You can

also collect seeds of native plants and grow them yourself.

Volunteer with Borderlands to learn how to design your pollinator garden. Contact Molly at 928-821-5100 or via email at MollyLMcCormick@gmail.com for more information. To volunteer with the Hummingbird Monitoring Network, visit <http://www.hummonnet.org>.



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