

Planting with a Pollinator-Friendly Purpose



BY COURTNEY COON

How can you benefit from the buzz while supporting the environment?

The best pollinator-friendly gardens support a variety of flowering plants that bloom throughout the calendar year. Growers — and consumers — are taking note and planting accordingly.

And in the end, everyone will benefit from the “buzz.”

“Pollinator health has made front-page news several times over the last couple of years, so people are now much more aware of their importance,” says David Smitley, professor of entomology and landscape industries and Extension specialist at Michigan State University. “Recent marketing research has found that some consumers at garden centers are looking for plants attractive to pollinators, and they are willing to pay more for them.”

Greenhouse growers are set to benefit from the trend.

“While the level of scrutiny that our industry faced seems to have declined, we are very aware of the public concern over pollinator health and consumer activism and are doing our best to balance this with the need to produce quality crops that perform for consumers — and that, in turn, attract pollinators,” said Mark Broxon, executive director at Proven Winners.

“The millennium generation is just coming into gardening and their perceptions will drive this,” he says. “They are fascinated with what they

can produce or grow on their own while being very mindful of their roles as responsible global citizens.”

CROP SELECTION

According to Smitley, growers should keep two things in mind when selecting for pollinator-friendliness:

1. Look for plants that provide ample amounts of pollen and nectar accessible to pollinators.
2. Make sure the plants are not treated with a systemic insecticide in the greenhouse or sprayed with any insecticide (except with a short list of bee-friendly products) the last four weeks before shipping.

If growers plan to ship to Minnesota, he adds, they should become familiar with the legal definition of a bee-friendly plant as defined by the state prior to shipment.

What are the top 10 annuals and top 10 perennials greenhouse growers can market to encourage pollinator health?

“We’re working on it,” says Cristi Palmer, IR-4 ornamental horticulture program manager at Rutgers University. “Anecdotally, there are a number of good crops to plant for pollinators: marigolds, zinnias, snapdragons and salvia are some annuals. Some perennials include



Million Pollinator Garden Challenge social media graphics, as well as point-of-purchase materials, are available to greenhouse growers and garden centers looking to spread the word to their customers. (Photo: www.growwise.org)

catmint, single-petal roses, monarda, lavender and lupines. But not all of these are suitable in all potential landscape sites. The plants for gardens in Florida may be very different from those in California or in the northeast. Part of our grant activities is compiling scientific reports of attractive plants and creating a searchable database that relies on visitors entering their zip codes and some plant characteristics like ‘full sun’ to provide a list of regional plants.”

Palmer says this is currently being developed and they are planning on having it available mid-year.

CONTINUED RESEARCH

Smitley, Palmer, and a team of researchers in entomology, residue chemists and agriculture marketing joined forces to conduct a research project that has several goals to aid growers in what to produce as pollinator forage and how to manage pests on their crops while protecting bee pollinators. The top 10 list mentioned above will be developed from their findings.

“To do this, we are studying the top-selling annuals and herbaceous perennials for their attractiveness to bees and identifying the pollen that honey bees bring back to hives placed in urban landscapes,” Palmer says. “We are also developing data to understand whether plants treated with systemic insecticides pose a risk to bees by analyzing pollen and nectar over time.”

“By comparing current pest management practices with alternative strategies for economics and efficacy, we will be providing guidance to growers and landscape managers with updated Best Management Practices,” she adds. “We are also examining consumer preferences and knowledge about protecting bees so that our industry can better market plants for pollinators to consumers who want to place them in their gardens.”

The pollinator research project was funded by a grant from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s Specialty Crop Research Initiative.

CONSUMER MARKETING

Determining which plants to grow is half the battle; consumer marketing and education is equally as important.

“It is important for Proven Winners and others to help growers and retailers be prepared with solutions to meet the needs of our customers,” Broxon says. The company offers a variety of point-of-purchase materials on its website to help growers and retailers.


Bees, butterflies and hummingbirds help to create the eye-catching displays in store and online.

“Not only have the amount of pollinator-friendly plants in our annuals, perennials and flowering shrub product lines increased significantly in the past few years based on this level of focus, we have also created videos for our Proven Winners University to train garden center associates about pollinator-friendly plants,” he says.

If you’re looking for more pollinator-friendly marketing opportunities, National Wildlife Federation is promoting the following campaigns in 2018.


- **Garden for Wildlife.** This year, the Garden for Wildlife is celebrating its 45th birthday. According to Senior Director Mary Phillips, the organization engages some 500,000 people annually that are planting and maintaining gardens throughout their communities. Visit www.nwf.org/garden for more information.
- **Million Pollinator Garden Challenge.** The goal is to register 1 million pollinator-friendly public or private gardens or landscapes across the country. Close to 700,000 have registered and Phillips hopes to surpass the 1 million mark this year. Point-of-purchase materials are available for growers and garden centers on www.millionpollinatorgardens.org under the “Resources” tab.
- **Mayors’ Monarch Pledge.** An opportunity for municipalities in the U.S., Canada and Mexico to pledge to create monarch-friendly habitats in their communities and educate citizens about the importance of pollinators. Phillips said they’ve received 370 pledges over the past two years.
- **Butterfly Heroes.** Launched in 2015, the initiative educates consumers about the monarch butterfly and provides pledges with a monarch garden starter kit. Phillips said more than 150,000 have already taken the pledge.

“There’s real evidence that shows that these movements are changing the tides for pollinators and their populations,” Phillips says.



ROOTSHIELD® PLUS+
Safe. Proven. Effective.

.....

 **BioWorks®**

Control diseases. Promote healthy root systems.	
VISIT US IN BOOTH 2515 AT CULTIVATE'18! 	DUAL MODES OF ACTION With two active ingredients, RootShield PLUS+ prevents a greater spectrum of root diseases.

For 25 years our customers have trusted RootShield to control diseases and promote healthy root systems – safely.

With RootShield PLUS+ you get prevention of soilborne *Phytophthora*, and improved control of hot - season *Pythium*. It also controls diseases caused by *Cylindrocladium*, *Fusarium*, *Pythium*, *Rhizoctonia* and *Thielaviopsis*.

Safer for plants, workers and the environment - RootShield PLUS+ is the right choice for organic and IPM programs.

bioworksinc.com/gpn (888) 216-5832



CREATE A POLLINATOR'S PARADISE


POLLINATORS ARE A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF A HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM.

Providing a habitat of bright, fragrant flowers in your containers and the landscape attracts pollinators, adding life and magic to your space. Support the survival and health of pollinators by planting a habitat for them today!



Hummingbirds visit over 1,000 FLOWERS PER HOUR

"Every third bite of food that you take, thank a bee or other pollinator."



91%

THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 240,000 FLOWERING PLANTS WORLDWIDE. OF THESE, 91% REQUIRE AN INSECT OR ANIMAL TO DISTRIBUTE THEIR POLLEN TO SET FRUIT OR SEED



2-3 MASON BEES can pollinate AN ENTIRE MATURE APPLE TREE

PLANTS THAT ATTRACT HUMMINGBIRDS

VERMILLIONAIRE® *Cuphea*
 LUSCIOUS® *Lantana*
 ABLAZIN® and PLAYIN' THE BLUES® *Salvia*
 'Cat's Meow' *Nepeta*
 SONIC BLOOM® *Weigela*

PLANTS THAT ATTRACT BUTTERFLIES

SEÑORITA ROSALITA® *Cleome*
 SUPERTUNIA® *Petunia*
 INTENSIA® *Phlox*
 'Pardon My' *Monarda*
 INSPIRED® and LO & BEHOLD® *Buddleia*

See A Full List of Plants That Attract Pollinators.
 Visit: www.beauty.provenwinners.com/diy-pollinator-plant-list

Find Out How To Keep Your Own Mason Bees!
 Visit: www.beauty.provenwinners.com/mason-bees



PW
 PROVEN WINNERS®
 The #1 Plant Brand.™

PROVEN POLLINATORS

POLLINATORS ARE A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF A HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM.

2-3 MASON BEES can pollinate AN ENTIRE MATURE APPLE TREE


Hummingbirds visit over 1,000 FLOWERS PER HOUR

"Every third bite of food that you take, thank a bee or other pollinator."

E.O. WILSON


A-V BENCH SYSTEMS

"An investment worth making"



Bench tops attach to any type of frame

- A-V plastic Bench Tops are available in two sizes and may be attached to any type frame.
- A-V plastic Bench Tops are strong enough to walk on when properly supported and are UV protected for long life.
- A-V plastic Bench Tops provide a safe, smooth working surface — no tipping or catching of trays and no sharp edges.



A-V International
 P.O. Box 336, Broadway, VA 22815 USA

Phone: (540) 896-6378 • Toll-free: (800) 328-6378
 FAX: (540) 896-7079 • Email: AgriAVINT@aol.com

www.a-vinternational.com

Pollinator-friendly point-of-purchase marketing materials, like the one shown here, are available for download on www.provenwinners.com. (Photo: Proven Winners)

"If you encourage consumers to include pollinator-friendly plants in their landscapes and educate them about the environmental impacts related to pollinators, landscapes and life is enhanced for both people and wildlife."

To aid in their efforts, the National Wildlife Federation partnered with Doug Tallamy, an entomologist at University of Delaware, to launch the Native Plant Finder (www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder). Consumers — and growers — can search the database by zip code and discover

which butterflies and moths are prevalent in their area and which plants each species relies on for survival.

"On a short-term basis, it's a resource for growers to share with consumers to help inform and educate," Phillips says. "But I'd love to work with greenhouse growers and explore more ways the database can help them better serve their customers." [gpn](#)

Courtney Coon is a freelance writer based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She can be reached at courtneycoon@gmail.com.