TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Pollinator Conservation

There are numerous animal pollinators with the majority of those being insects. When most people think of pollinators, they think of bees and more specifically, honey bees. While honey bees are pollinators, they are only a small portion of the bee population around the world. The majority of bees are solitary and nest in the ground. Solitary bees are not aggressive so people should not be afraid of them, especially since many of them are also stingless.

Butterflies and moths are also important pollinators. Unfortunately, due to habitat destruction and other factors, their populations are on the decline. If you want to provide habitat for butterflies and moths, you need to ensure to fulfill the requirements of all life stages. Host plants are needed for eggs and caterpillars; nectar plants are needed for adults; and overwintering sites are needed for various stages.

Flies are an often overlooked pollinator. With their poor reputation for carrying diseases, many people think of flies as pests. Flies can be beneficial by fitting into food webs, breaking down waste material, and pollinating plants (including some food crops such as apples and peppers).

Ideas to conserve pollinators:

- Plant native plants that provide nectar blooms spring, summer, and fall
    - Provide a variety of colors
    - Provide a variety of flower/ bloom shapes
    - Provide multiple levels
- Reduce turf and replace with flowering plants
- Plant native bunch grasses which can provide food and shelter for insects
- Allow fallen leaves to remain on property to provide shelter
- Create areas of bare soil for ground nesting bees (choose sunny areas that will provide dry soil)
- Use IPM (integrated pest management) to reduce pesticide use
- Provide water in a SAFE manner for insects
    - Use shallow dishes with rocks or stones

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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