Article written by Calla Edwards Submitted by K-State Research & Extension - Butler County May 8, 2023

The Grapevine

Gardening for Pollinators

The flash of a colorful butterfly and the buzz of a bumble bee traveling between flowers bring extra beauty and enjoyment to our gardens. Pollinators serve an important role in our ecosystem but they also bring beauty to our lives by simply watching them live and do their thing. A pollinator garden can easily become a focal point of any landscape. Planning your garden or landscape to include plants that attract and sustain butterflies, bees, and other beneficial insects can increase the populations of these desired insects and increase the diversity you can observe and enjoy. Let's walk through planning a pollinator garden that can attract a variety of beneficial insects to your yard this year.

Location, location, location. One of the first steps to planning your pollinator garden is to pick the location. The best location is one that receives as much light as possible. Butterflies and other pollinators are cold blooded and need sunshine to warm up their bodies. Butterflies in fact cannot fly unless their body temperatures is 86 degrees or warmer so they are most active when the sun shines. The other reason to have a location in full sun is that most of the plants that pollinators prefer require at least six hours of direct sunlight a day to perform best. Try to pick a location that is out of the harsh winds as much as possible. This helps both the plants and the butterflies survive and prevents damage to both.





<u>Pick your plants.</u> When we think of plants for pollinators we typically think of the flowers the plants provide but it is important to provide food sources for all stages of a pollinators life cycle. Simply providing nectar sources for the adults is not enough to attract and keep pollinators in your back yard. You will need to also have host plants for the pollinator caterpillars or larval form to feed on. Many plants can pull double duty and serve both purposes but not all. If you want specific butterflies to come to your back yard, be sure to pick host plants that those butterflies specifically like. We all know that monarch caterpillars need milkweed but did you know that black swallowtails are the only ones who feed on dill while Zebra swallowtail caterpillars only feed on pawpaw trees. As you are choosing plants be sure to choose a mix of plants that have bloom times that cover the entire growing season to ensure there is a food source for the butterflies for the entire summer. Herbs are also attractive to many different pollinators and

mixing them in with other plants can provide a pleasing aesthetic. When you are making your design place the plants in blocks rather than individually as the blocks of color are easier for the pollinators to see. There is a big push for using native plants in pollinator gardens and while that is a great idea, pollinators will also use non-native plants in addition to natives. Check out the attached list of plants by Johnson County Master Gardeners for ideas.

<u>Provide the extras.</u> While food sources are important for pollinators they aren't the only items we should be incorporating into our pollinator garden. As was mentioned before, insects are cold blooded and need the sunlight to warm up so they can fly. Be sure to add areas such as stones or bricks that will be in the sun early in the day for the insects to bask on so they can warm up. These stones can easily to incorporated into any landscape and add some unique elements to your design. Don't forget to provide a water source for the insects. Mud puddles are a wonderful and inexpensive option, but you can also use shallow dishes or birdbaths with rocks in them to give the insects a place to perch while they are drinking.



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Planning a garden for pollinators doesn't have to be rocket science but it can provide years of enjoyment for you and your family watching the butterflies, bees and other pollinators fly around your back yard. There are many resources available for helping to plan your garden. Check out some of those resources or if you live in Butler County check out the pollinator garden at the Ranger Station at the El Dorado State Park for some ideas of things you can do in your back yard. Be sure to check out the additional resources included with this publication.

Weed of the Week- White Clover

Our weed this week is White Clover. This weed has a mixed reputation with some homeowners wanting it to disappear while other homeowners see it as an opportunity to help pollinators by using clover as a low maintenance lawn alternative. No matter where you fall on the spectrum you likely have some clover somewhere in your yard. White clover is a member of the legume family and is known for it's ability to fix nitrogen in the soil. It is a prostrate, mat forming herbaceous perennial that has unique leaves with 3 to 4 leaflets and white blooms throughout the growing season. White clover grows four to six inches tall and can spread over 12" or more by stems that root freely to the ground. This clover is native to Europe but it has naturalized across the United States.



In a home lawn, clover is a common issue and can be a symptom that your grass is suffering from a lack of nitrogen in the soil. Once established, clovers are hard to kill however products containing the active ingredients dicamba, clopyralid, fluroxyper and quinclorac or a product with a combination of those products tends to have the best success. The best time to control clover is in the fall when the plant is actively transporting sugars to it's roots for the winter, if you spray in the spring there maybe some regrowth of the plant and a lack of control. Clover can also make a wonderful alternative to traditional grass lawns. In fact at one-point, white clover seed was included in cool season turf grass seed however that practice has been mostly discontinued. Clover responds to mowing with aggressive growth and tolerates some traffic. There are few disease or insect issues with clover making it a low maintenance option that requires less mowing, water or chemical applications than traditional lawns. While white clover is not a lawn option for everyone, how much we try to keep it out of our lawns is ultimately a personal preference.

Plant of the Week- Wisteria



This week I want to highlight wisteria. Wisteria is a beautiful vining perennial that can grow to 25-30 feet long. This vine is known for it's beautiful long clusters of flowers. The flower color on wisteria is dependent on the variety but range in color from white to pink to deep reddish to bluish-violet. Once the flowers have disappeared bean-like pods appear and remain through the winter. One complaint about wisteria is often that the vines simply are not blooming. Some wisteria vines will need 7 to 15 years before they will produce their first flowers and excessive nitrogen fertilizer may stimulate leaf and stem growth but inhibit flower formation. There are some practices that can help induce flowering including an application of superphosphate fertilizer in the spring, severe pruning of new

growth in late spring or early summer and finally root pruning (cutting the roots with a spade a few feet from the trunk) in the fall. It's best to purchase grafted plants from the nursery to speed up the blooming process. Wisteria are a perfect option to train along a fence or on stoutly constructed arbors or pergolas. These vines are also an excellent option over patios or open structured roofs. Wisteria will need regular pruning to keep the vine in check throughout the growing season so this is not a low maintenance plant. This is also not a plant to use climbing up a tree or near another desirable shrub as they will choke them out. There are two main types of wisteria, the Japanese wisteria or the Chinese wisteria. The later is more commonly grown in gardens as all the blooms open at the same time providing a better flower display than Japanese wisteria.

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Issue of the Week- Fruit Thinning

Sometimes too much of a good thing is not a good thing. Such is the case when your fruit trees (except cherries) are over loaded with fruit. Too much fruit can interfere with fruit bud development this summer which results in a smaller crop or even no crop the next year and the heavy fruit can lead to damage of the limbs or breaking limbs in some cases. Having extra fruit will also make for smaller, lower quality fruit even though you get lots of them. The only fruit tree that doesn't need thinned is a cherry tree that can carry the full fruit load. Below are some recommendations for thinning fruits on various species:

• Apples and Pears- Fruit should be 6-8" apart. Apples tend to cluster in groups of five, if that is the case leave only the biggest fruit from the cluster.



- Peaches- Thin so fruits are 6-8" apart. Peaches also tend to cluster, try to average 7" between fruit if possible.
- Plums and Prunes- Thin to 4-5" apart
- Apricots- Thin to 2-4" apart.

Thin fruit on trees as early as possible to reduce the stress on the trees and increase the size of the fruit that is left. To remove the fruit, simply pinch the excess fruit off with your fingers or use pruners. Be careful to clean pruners when moving from one tree to another and try not to break off the fruiting spur when you are thinning the fruit.



Reminders-

• Harvest asparagus until spear size diminishes. Usually 6 to 8 weeks after first harvest.

- It is too early to spray for bagworms
- It is too late to spray for peach leaf curl
- Start fruit spray schedule after petal drop.
- Allow lawn to dry until see purplish areas in lawn before watering as this increases drought hardiness.

Video of the week: Culinary and Medicinal Herbs

Herbs can be used for cooking or medicinal purposes. And some herbs can be used for both purposes. This segment covers three examples in the onion family that can spice up your cooking dishes. And, learn the difference between garlic and regular chives! Watch the video here:

https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/culinary-and-medicinal-herbs

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Upcoming Events

June 7th at Noon- Drought Tolerant Lawns of Kansas- Warm Season Turfgrass
Kansas weather is extreme, but summers are frequently hot and dry. Join Dr. Ross Braun, Assistant Professor
of Turfgrass and Landscape Management, as he explains what it means to live in our "transitional climatic
zone", with the option to grow both cool- and warm-season turfgrass species. Learn how to grow grass species
that are more drought tolerant, in order to better survive our summer weather and conserve water. This class is
offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here:
https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/

• July 5th at Noon- Solutions to Your Top Garden Insect and Disease Problems

Insects, diseases, and weather related problems are always an issue in the landscape & garden. Judy O'Mara, Director of the K-State Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab, and Dr. Raymond Cloyd, Extension Specialist in Horticultural Entomology, are here to help! Learn to identify and solve the plant problems you should be on the lookout for, and bring your insect & disease questions for assistance from our experts. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: <u>https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/</u>

• August 2nd at Noon- Integrating Native Plants into your Home Landscape

Native plants are growing in popularity in the home landscape. Dr. Sharon Ashworth, Douglas County Horticulture & Natural Resources Extension Agent, will discuss the ecological benefits of native plants and how to successfully integrate natives into your landscape. Learn about what defines a native plant, which native plants work best, and what maintenance is required to grow a beautiful landscape of natives. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/