

Plan to Reduce Pesticides to Support Pollinators in Honor of Earth Day

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With Earth Day on its way on April 22, many people across the world turn their thoughts to how to reduce their own negative impacts on our planet Earth.

Here in Carson City, our local Bee City USA committee is committed to expanding pollinator habitat and educating the public about the importance of pollinators in our ecosystem. Protecting bees and butterflies is a great way to help the Earth! With 1 out of every 3 bites of food we eat made possible thanks to a pollinator, it's vital to our own health and wellbeing that we protect the multitude of insects that pollinate fruits and vegetables, and make seeds and plant life viable.

One way that you can help pollinators is by being very careful with applications of chemicals in your garden. Avoid the use of neonicotinoids in plant materials, (either coated on seeds or in systemic treatments) and don't spray chemicals directly on flowers where bees gather nectar.

As you plan your garden for the year, think about ways you can better support pollinators throughout the season. Here are a few ideas:

--Plant native flowers that are pollinator friendly- penstemon, asters and sunflowers are favorites! You can find a link to Carson City's Pollinator Friendly Planting List by visiting our website: carson.org/beecityusa.

--Plant shrubs and trees that support bees and, in some years, even support fruit.

--You could leave your dandelions for the month of MAY! Bees love dandelions, and as my friend Myrna says, a 'No Mow' month of May would help the bees out tremendously. Dandelions are often the first source of food before other flowers start to emerge.

--If you have aphids (very common here) spray them off with high powered water, and bring in lady bugs, if available. After years of this approach, we have our own bounty of lady bugs each year, all happily munching those dreadful aphids.

--When it comes time to weed, try to dig out the weeds rather than spray. This works best in early spring! If you wait until the weed goes into flower or seed, it is going to be too late for effective eradication.

--Put out shallow dishes of water (with rocks or sticks across for safe access) for bees and birds to drink. You might be amazed by the variety of species that are in your yard that will come when water is available.

--In the fall, leave some excess leaf material and sticks in areas where pollinators can lay eggs, or if you are interested, set up a pollinator hotel, with small holes for pollinators to lay eggs. It's a fun project for kids to watch the hatchlings too!

--If you must use an herbicide (to kill weeds) here's an organic, pollinator safe recipe for your use:

WEED BE GONE POLLINATOR FRIENDLY HERBICIDE

- 1-gallon white vinegar
- 2 cups Epsom Salts
- ¼ cup Blue Dawn Liquid Soap
- Spray in the morning after dew is gone. After dinner weeds will be gone!
- *Caution*—Kills any plant it's sprayed on.

For more information about Bee City USA #76, or how to support pollinators, check out our webpage: carson.org/beecityusa, or get involved by joining our citizens committee! Email us at beecityusa76@gmail.com or call Kelly Clark at (775) 315-2719.