



Invite Pollinators to Your Yard, Brancel Says

Release Date: 6/1/17

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MADISON – Now that we can finally get into our gardens after a cold, rainy spring, Secretary Ben Brancel says we should keep our pollinators in mind. Brancel leads the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

"Don't think that you can't make a difference. Even someone in the middle of Milwaukee with a postage-stamp-sized lot can help pollinators. And when you do that, you help everyone, because we all eat and we need pollinators to produce many of our favorite foods," says Brancel.

Without pollinators, Wisconsin cranberry growers would lose three-quarters of their crop, apple growers would lose 80 percent, and cherry growers would lose 60 percent. In 2015, that would have added up to a whopping \$134 million loss.

Many people think of honeybees when they think of pollinators, and they are important. But Wisconsin also is home to about 400 species of native bees, including about 20 species of bumblebees. Many of the native bees are small and most people would not recognize them as bees. Monarch butterflies and some native fly species also help pollinate crops.

Vegetable gardens, fruit trees and shrubs, flower gardens and even your lawn can all provide habitat for both honeybees and native pollinating insects.

Wisconsin's Pollinator Protection Plan offers tips for helping you with pollinators in your yard:

- **Plants**
 - Choose plants that suit your soil, drainage, slope and sunlight and aim to have at least three species of flowers, herbs, fruits, vegetables, trees or shrubs blooming from early spring to late fall.
 - Include native plants, which tend to attract and support more pollinators. Avoid highly hybridized flowers, such as those bred to produce double blooms, because they often have little nectar or pollen.
 - Remove invasive plants and weeds that can take over and reduce the plant diversity that pollinators need.
 - Let dandelions, clover and other flowering plants bloom in your lawn. They provide pollen and nectar early in the season, before other plants flower. Pollinators don't visit many common cultivated early season flowers like tulips and daffodils.
- **Nesting**
 - While honeybees nest in colonies in hive boxes, native bees nest in the wild, often in the ground, hollow plant stems, or leaf litter. They are often solitary, and don't travel far, so they need nesting habitat near flowers.
 - Leave some areas of your yard uncultivated and a little messy. Wild bees like to nest in old rodent burrows, tree cavities, abandoned bird nests, and downed logs.
 - Before you destroy what looks like an anthill, check to see who is occupying it – it may be a bee nest.

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POLLINATORS – ADD ONE

- **Pesticides**

- Remember, the label is the law. More is not better. Look for the "bee advisory box" on pesticides that pose a particular risk to pollinators.
- Mow your lawn to remove clover or dandelion blooms before applying pesticides.
- Wait until flowering plants have finished blooming before applying systemic pesticides that you apply to the soil around the plant.
- Before you use products to destroy pests or diseases, be sure you know what the pest is and how destructive it is. You may not need to use any treatment at all. If you must treat, choose a product that poses the least risk to pollinators.

There are many online resources for gardeners and home owners, along with opportunities for them to become involved as citizen scientists. You can find web addresses and more detailed advice for making your yard a haven for pollinators in the Wisconsin Pollinator Protection Plan. Visit datcp.wi.gov and search for "pollinator".

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