

Dwindling Populations: Why You Should Be Concerned About Pollinators and How to Help



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An alarming amount of [pollinators](#) are facing population issues around the world. Many factors are at play, including some natural issues, such as diseases and pests. However, many of the causes are human made. The decline in pollinator populations is a threat to hundreds of billions of dollars worth of crops, the livelihood of humans, and the health of the global ecosystem. That's the bad news. The good news is that there are ways that people can help save the bees and other pollinators.

The Role Pollinators Play in Food Production

The health of pollinators is directly correlated to the health of the planet, including the health of people. Pollinators, especially bees, make a huge contribution to food production, which impacts our nutrition. More than 75 percent of the world's crops – including fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts and oils – rely on pollinators. These foods are crucial parts of our diets, providing important sources of vitamins and minerals. Without these foods, people would face malnutrition issues.

Additionally, many crops are an important source of income for states and countries. Pollinators contribute to crops that provide fibers (cotton), medicines, feed for livestock, biofuels (canola

and palm oils), and construction materials. Bees produce honey and [beeswax](#), which is used for candles, cosmetics, crayons, and more. Altogether, pollinators contribute up to \$577 billion worth of the world's crops.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FOA), "Pollinators, especially bees, have also played a role throughout human history as inspirations for art, music, religion, and technology." Moreover, they help to beautify the world. Around 90 percent of all wild flowering plants rely partially or completely on pollinators.

Creating a Pollinator-Friendly Garden

The FOA states that individuals can help pollinators by creating and maintaining [pollinator-friendly](#) habitats in urban landscapes. One of the best ways to help pollinators is to ensure your garden has a wide variety of plants that bloom from early spring to late fall. This ensures they have a food source throughout the year and not just in one season. Also, rather than spacing out single plants, place plants in clusters.

The best plants to choose will be the ones that are native to your region, as they're adapted to your climate, soil, and native pollinators. Try to avoid hybrid flowers and pesticides. To create nesting sites for native bees, leave dead limbs or stumps in safe areas of your yard or drill holes into a piece of scrap lumber and mount it to a post.

Bees use scent to find food, so [choose](#) fragrant flowers. Also, they're most attracted to flowers that are yellow, white, blue, and purple. Some flowers that bees enjoy include bee balm, stonecrop, butterfly bush, crocus, catmint, and more.

Getting Started on Your Garden

If you're just beginning to try out your green thumb, there are some great [tips](#) for first-time gardeners. Start small and increase your garden's size over time as you learn how much you can handle. Choose plants that are appropriate for your climate, soil conditions, and sunlight.

Test your soil to find out if you need to add any amendments. "Good soil is rich, black in color, and full of organic matter and worms," says Home Depot. When selecting a spot for your garden, pay attention to where the sun shines in your yard. Most plants need plenty of sun. A spot close to a water supply is helpful in keeping plants well watered.

Don't let a [small space](#) deter you from starting a garden. If you have a balcony or small patio space, you can utilize raised or stacked garden beds. Think about areas other than the ground too. Hang plants from awnings, and grow climbing plants on trellises and walls. You can also hang something from a wall in which to grow plants, such as a shoe organizer or pallet. Potted plants and window boxes are tried-and-true ways to grow a garden with limited space.

Bees and other pollinators need our help. Their populations are dropping fast, and many are facing extinction. The loss of pollinators would be a detrimental hit to our economy and our nutrition, as well as the world's entire ecosystem. No matter if you live in an apartment with a balcony or a home with ample yard space, you can help save the bees by growing a pollinator-friendly garden.

Author: Christy Erickson (SavingOurBees.org)