

Bees Bees Bees ! PPCMG

When you select plants, make native plants your first choice. They will do better here and are a magnet for pollinators. A few non natives are fine but make sure they are not considered invasive! The Master Gardeners have been teaching about pollinators, especially bees. The majority of bees are the solitary type and need our help providing them with native blooms and places to nest. Leave some patches of bare ground and avoid chemical sprays if possible. Plant blooming natives in swaths of the same plant to make it easier for the pollinators that prefer that bloom. Make an effort to choose plants that bloom at different times so there will always be food available.

Bee keepers deal with honey bees and most keep bees for the honey. There are some bee keepers that do it just to help the bees, though. Surprisingly, the majority of pollinators are not the honey bees but the other types of bees. In our area we see bumble bees, wood bees, and mason bees. Building a place for the mason bees is a fun project. There are some very specific requirements. If you are interested, contact the Extension Office and they will put you in touch with someone that can help.

The type of bloom on a plant is important to a bee. It needs a sort of landing platform in order to get to the pollen. Smaller trumpet shaped blooms are usually good for butterflies and hummingbirds but not for bees. A flat open type of bloom is better for a bee. If a large number of blooms are the same, that makes it easier for the pollen to be collected and returned to the hive. Bees won't mix types of pollen. Bees don't see the color red. The bee has a compound eye and has a very different type of vision than a human. Plants and blooms actually have an electric field that makes it possible for the bee to know if its pollen has been recently collected. There is so much to learn from these tiny insects!

Watch for the next class the Master gardeners teach! Questions? Extension Office # is 940-659-1228.