

Bee a Champion for Pollinators

Bid adieu to winter and start laying out the welcome mat for butterflies, bees, hummingbirds and other pollinators.

Planting a garden to attract insects may sound odd until you consider that about 85 percent of flowering plants and trees depend on busy bees and butterflies for survival. Or to put it another way, you can thank pollinators for one of every three bites of food you eat, according to the magazine *Birds and Blooms*. Unfortunately, pollinator populations are declining fast, and honeybees are suffering most, with as many as 4,000 species on the verge of extinction.

Gail Eichelberger, a therapist and devoted gardener, says she fell in love with pollinator-friendly gardening 30 years ago. Since then, she's transformed her Nashville, Tennessee, backyard into a pollinator's paradise, sharing experiences on her gardening blog "Clay and Limestone" (clayandlimestone.com).

"It's important for people to have gardens because they can be an oasis in the middle of a desert to pollinators," Eichelberger explains. "One yard might contain pesticides or a whole neighborhood may require residents to only have a lawn, and in those cases there's nothing for animals or insects."

The good news is you can help pollinators thrive by doing what you love—growing flowers! Here's how to be

a better friend to the bees and other pollinators in your backyard or community garden:

Be choosy. Select plants that are native to your area. Eichelberger likes to say "You can't create an English garden in the South." Still, you can create a blooming habitat with plants that suit your climate, soil and growing conditions. Plant flowers that are pollen-rich or contain nectar, as well as a variety of host plants. Include a mix of colors, heights and fragrances, and plant each species en masse to lure more pollinators.

Add water. Shallow birdbaths, mud puddles or even small saucers lined with rocks and sand offer up cool drinks to bees, birds and butterflies. Water sources also supply the salt and minerals your flying friends need on hot, dry days.

Ditch pesticides. Even organic pesticides can be toxic to bees and other beneficial garden insects. Invite your neighbors to join your pesticide ban and your local habitat will grow yard by yard.

Provide shelter. About 70 percent of bees are ground nesters, Eichelberger explains, burrowing in old mouse holes or other undisturbed area in your garden. Leaving a 3-foot, uncultivated area in the sun gives bees a place to call home. You can also drill small holes in decaying logs or stumps to make a residence for tunneling bees. Some gardeners even build or purchase bee houses and pollinator condos! ■



For links to regional plant lists for pollinators, visit H2U.com/magazine.

20 Plants Pollinators Love

To keep pollinators around, design a garden that blooms from early spring into late fall. Try some of these seasonal favorites. Just remember, native varieties are a gardener's (and pollinator's) best friends.

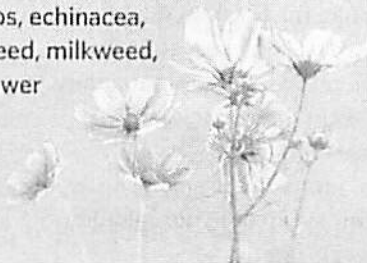


SPRING:

bluebells, calendula, crocus, grape hyacinth, hellebores, spiderwort, wild lilac, wild geranium

SUMMER:

bee balm, blanket flower, cosmos, echinacea, ironweed, milkweed, sunflower



FALL:

asters, goldenrod, sedum, witch hazel, zinnias



Build-Your-Own Smoothie



1. Select a liquid.

Water, milk and dairy-free milk (like almond or coconut milk) are healthy options for smoothies, Hunt explains. You typically need one to two cups of liquid. For a thicker consistency, use less liquid.

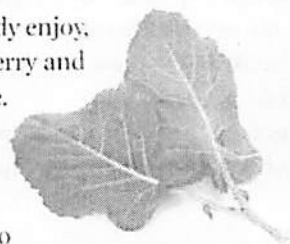
2. Add a creamy or thickening base.

A banana is a classic smoothie base because it's creamy and sweet. However, you can thicken up a smoothie with avocado, Greek yogurt, frozen fruit, nut butters and even ice, Hunt says.

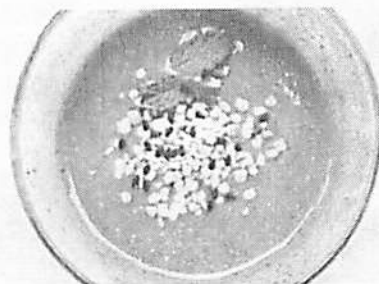


3. Toss in some fruits and veggies. This is where experimenting with different recipes can be fun, Hunt explains. For a fruit smoothie, try combinations of flavors you already enjoy, such as a strawberry and banana smoothie.

Or, blend up a tropical treat by combining pineapple, mango and coconut. For a green smoothie, try a mixture of kale, spinach and fruit.



4. Give it a boost. Take your smoothie to the next level with extras that add nutrition or taste. If you're not using fruit for sweetness, you can



Springtime Smoothies

There's nothing like a chilled, delicious smoothie to kick-start your morning or keep you going between meals. When made with good-for-you fruits, veggies and whole grains, a smoothie is a convenient way to get valuable nutrients in a single glass, says Keyaira Hunt, RD, LD, a clinical dietitian at Fairview Park Hospital in Dublin, Georgia.

Healthy smoothies are easy to make at home where you can control

the ingredients. Bottled smoothies from supermarkets or made-to-order smoothies from restaurants are often high in sugar, fat and calories. Plus, serving sizes can be over the top. A medium Activator Strawberry Banana smoothie from Smoothie King, for example, contains 49 grams of sugar and 410 calories. Bottled smoothies can also be deceptive. The nutrition label may list information for one serving, while the bottle actually contains two or more servings. Plus, bottled smoothies often contain more processed fruit juice than blended whole ingredients.

Ready to jump on the smoothie bandwagon? Whip out your blender and start experimenting!

← : BADGER ANTI-BUG SHAKE AND SPRAY

ACTIVE INGREDIENTS Soybean, citronella, and geranium oils (all organic), among others

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH *The New England Journal of Medicine* says soybean oil may be an effective shield against mosquitoes, and a disease vector study concluded that geranium oil is stronger than citronella oil.

FIELD TEST Lather up (really, use more than you think you should), then laugh at the mosquitoes.

AROMA A little chemically and slightly sweet. But tolerable.

\$12 for 4 ounces, badgerbalm.com

→ : SKEETER SCREEN PATIO EGG

ACTIVE INGREDIENTS Geraniol and lemongrass oil

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH Because it uses 95 percent geraniol (the active component in geranium oil), this sucker packs a punch.

FIELD TEST Park (or hang) this diffuser, or "egg," on the patio to keep pests away. But bite-prone folks may still need a secondary repellent. Also, you'll need to replenish the oil after it evaporates.

AROMA Mildly soapy

\$18 for the egg, including 4 ounces of oil, scentshop.com



← : HOMEMADE BUG SPRAY

INGREDIENTS Witch hazel, citronella oil, and eucalyptus oil. Pour 1.5 ounces of witch hazel into a 2-ounce pump-spray bottle. Add 10 drops of citronella oil and 10 drops of eucalyptus oil. Shake vigorously.

FIELD TEST Not great. So I added 10 more drops of each, tested for efficacy, then added another 10, and kept testing until I got up to 40 drops of each. The result was an effective repellent that required less frequent application than Buzz Away or Badger.

CAUTION Even natural ingredients can irritate or be poisonous, so err on the side of using too little.



WHEN IT COMES TO BEARS, GO BIG

The best anti-bear pepper spray is the largest canister you can find with the longest spray duration and distance. (Experts recommend sprays of at least six seconds that reach at least 25 feet.) Too many tales of bear-on-human attacks involve "trigger lock"—a panicked person holds the trigger until the can is drained, at which point the bear comes back. Counter Assault meets the size, length, and distance recommendations. Pricy, but cheaper than a ride in a medical chopper. \$55 for 10.2 ounces, counterassault.com