POLLINATORS, PLANTS, & HUMANS

What animals and insects are pollinators? Ants, bees, bats, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, wasps, and small mammals are the **most common pollinators**. As many as 1,500 species of vertebrates also serve as pollinators. These include hummingbirds, perching birds, fruit bats, opossums, lemurs and even a lizard (the gecko).

What do pollinators do? Pollinators help in the pollination of plants. **Pollination** is the process where pollen is transferred from one part of a flower, the anther, to another, the stigma. Pollinators transport pollen grains on their body parts as they move about to drink nectar or eat pollen from many different flowers.

The National Geographic Society describes a keystone species as "a plant or animal that plays a unique and crucial role in the way an ecosystem functions." Pollinators are a keystone species. Our natural ecosystem would be dramatically different or cease to exist altogether if pollinators are not locally present.

Why do humans need pollinators? Pollinators are directly responsible for one-third of all food that we consume, including fruits, vegetables, coffee, and chocolate.

What do pollinators need? Just like humans, pollinators need **food, shelter, and water**. Pollinators drink morning dew, rainfall or from fresh water sources. When water is scarce, humans can help pollinators by setting out a bird bath or shallow dish filled with water and pebbles or stones, so they have a place to land and safely get a drink.

Did you know? According to Gardener's Supply website "Of the estimated 240,000 species of flowering plants worldwide, 91 percent require an insect or animal to distribute their pollen to set fruit and seed. Pollinators are essential to ensuring reproduction and genetic diversity among plants." Plants are critical to the functioning of natural ecosystems as they provide food, form habitats, and offer a variety of other resources for many animal species. Presently populations of many pollinator species are on the decline. Pollinators need help.

How you can help pollinators: Plant a variety of native, nectar and pollen-producing flowers. An ideal pollinator habitat contains 6-8 plants from each of three species that bloom at different times (May- September). That means three species that bloom in early-season, three that bloom in mid-season, and three late season blooming species.

**For more information, including a downloadable Pollinator Journal, visit the Monkton Conservation Commission website or email RCP Coordinator*:
http://monktonvt.com/boards-and-committees/conservation-commission/

This information was compiled for your reference by the Mid-Champlain Valley Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP). Materials provided by Gardener's Supply Company, and Mid-Champlain Valley Regional Conservation Partnership.
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What's Buzzing in My Garden?

Spend 30 minutes in your garden keeping track of the number of pollinators that visit different colored flowers. Record your observations in this chart.

	Red	Orange	Yellow	Green	Blue	Purple	Pink	White
Bee								
Butterfly								
Beetle								
Fly								
Hummingbird								

What can you learn from your observations?

What pollinator did you see the most? _____

The least? _____

Did some pollinators visit only flowers of one color? _____

Which pollinators? _____

Which colors? _____

Did some pollinators visit many different colored flowers? _____

Which pollinators? _____

What colors? _____