



Lesson Plan — Planting and Caring for a Pollinator Garden

Students will gain hands-on experience at how to plant and care for a garden that attracts bees and other pollinators.

Materials Needed:

Wildflower seed packet provided by **Project Plant It!**

Gardening tools, such as a small shovel or spade, watering can, gardening gloves

Time:

Several science class periods of approximately 30 minutes each

Procedure:

Helpful tips before you start:

- An outdoor pollinator garden does not require a lot of space; any size of plot will work.
- Wildflower seeds can be planted in outdoor containers if space for a garden is limited.
- The site should get at least six hours of sun each day and should be in an area protected from the wind.
- Pollinator gardens should have a mixture of wildflowers of varying shapes and sizes, with some trees and shrubs nearby to provide shelter.*
- The greater the variety of plants in your pollinator garden, the more pollinators it will attract.
- The wildflowers in a pollinator garden should have different colors and fragrances, and bloom at different times to provide pollen and nectar throughout the life cycle stages of pollinators.
- Provide water sources for pollinators (see **Bee-Friendly Water Dish**).
- Never use pesticides or herbicides of any kind near the pollinator garden.

* The wildflower seed packets and the redbud tree seedlings provided by **Project Plant It!** meet all of these criteria.

Planting the pollinator garden:

- Clear the area of any weeds, vines, or undesired plants.
- Loosen the soil and add some topsoil if necessary.
- Add one or two inches of organic compost if possible.

Continued on next page.

Bee-Friendly Water Dish

Did you know that bees drink water? Here's how you can help: Place a shallow dish in a protected area of your pollinator garden. Put a few small stones or marbles in the dish so that the bees will have something to stand on when they swoop in for a sip. Then put some water in the dish and refill it as needed when the water evaporates. Your pollinator friends will “bee” very appreciative of your thoughtfulness!



Create a Bee-n-Bee Hotel

Bees and other pollinators need shelter areas in their habitats. Here's how to help them out:

Arrange rocks and pieces of wood in the pollinator garden. This gives your pollinator

friends a place to hide or rest between visits to the wildflowers in the garden—no reservations required!



- Sprinkle the wildflower seeds around the prepared area and cover loosely with soil.
- Keep the area moist until the wildflowers are about 6 inches tall, then water occasionally if rainfall is limited.
- If a redbud tree seedling has been provided by **Project Plant It!**, plant the seedling near the garden because the redbud blossoms will attract bees and other pollinators (see **Safety Tips**).

Caring for the pollinator garden:

- Manually pull any weeds from the garden.
- Water often during the first year, but over-watering can stress the plants.
- Refill the bee-friendly water dish as needed.
- Add some plants or seeds if needed to replenish empty spots in the garden.
- Add some compost in the spring.
- Place some decaying wood, leaves and grasses nearby to protect your pollinators (see **Create a Bee-n-Bee Hotel**).

Guest speaker suggestion:

Invite a Master Gardener, a Garden Club member, or a parent who loves gardening to give a short presentation about how to plant and care for a pollinator garden.

Outcome/Result:

Students will participate in an important initiative that increases bee and pollinator populations in their community and supports environmental sustainability.

Pollinator Posters

The U.S. Forest Service has a number of posters about wildflowers and pollinators that educators and group leaders can download at

www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/features/posters.shtml

Five-Minute Science Project

Find a wildflower in the backyard, in a park, or on the school grounds, and observe it quietly for at least five minutes. Make a note of any pollinators—bees, insects or birds—that visit the wildflower during that time. If some pollinators drop by for a visit, you're watching science in action!



Safety Tips

- To ensure safety, always call **811** before you dig into the ground.
- Do not plant trees underneath or within **25 feet** of an overhead power line.
- Do not plant trees on top of underground power, cable, phone or gas lines.



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**



Sponsored by Dominion Energy, one of the nation's largest producers and transporters of energy, **Project Plant It!** is a community effort to educate students, plant trees and wildflowers, and improve the environment.