

Save the Hummus and the Berry Pie!

Many of the foods we enjoy every day require the involvement of a pollinator to exist. Berries, cherries, and peaches are all dependent on bees to pollinate the flowers from which they are produced. Let's not forget that to have hummus, extra hot jalapeno dip and even an order of French fries we need pollinators to produce beans, peppers and potatoes! This is of importance because bees, the principal pollinators in North America, have suffered drastically declining populations due to loss of habitat, disease and pesticides.

To flourish, bees have a few basic habitat requirements: a flower rich area to provide food, suitable places to nest and lay eggs, and an environment free of pesticides. If each of us would only provide one thing on this list, we could make a significant difference.

Feed a bee. Bees need a constant source of food. Planning your yard or streamside area for a variety of flowering plants, so that something is in bloom from spring to fall, is the ideal habitat.

Provide a home. Native bees look for untidy areas of our yards or farms to nest. Keep a small section of your property for brush piles, open sandy ground or old tree stumps. If this goes against your aesthetic convictions, then hang up a bee nest. Many books and websites provide plans or sources to purchase these ready-made homes.

Keep it clean! If at all possible avoid the use of pesticides and herbicides. Dig or pull weeds and use mulches to keep the weeds down. Try using organic methods of insect control instead of pesticides.

For more information on how to provide a safe and healthy environment for our friends, the pollinators, stop by the Clackamas County Soil and Water Conservation District booth at the Clackamas County Fair or go online to www.xerces.org. Oh, and pass the tomato catsup for those fries!