behold, the mighty pollinator

Pollinators such as bees, flies, moths, butterflies, beetles, hummingbirds and bats are crucial to the survival of entire ecosystems.

A few reasons to show pollinators some love:

75% of all food we eat benefits from pollination.

Honey bees are responsible for as much as **$5.2 billion of agriculture production** in the United States alone.

More than **20,000 species** of bees exist worldwide.

Love chocolate? You have gnats to thank!

protecting our pollinators

At the Chicago Academy of Sciences / Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum we work to protect and reestablish populations of locally imperiled pollinators. We also monitor butterfly populations throughout the state via the Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network citizen science program.

Our conservation efforts currently focus on the Regal Fritillary (*Speyeria idalia*), and the Swamp Metalmark (*Calephelis muticum*), the latter of which is endangered in Illinois. For both species, we coordinate restoration of their native habitat and propagate adult butterflies in our butterfly conservation lab for the purpose of reintroduction.
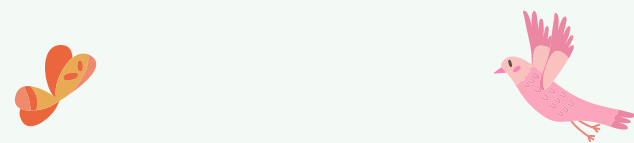
The Chicago Wilderness Council recently designated the Regal Fritillary as a priority species. The Nature Museum has been chosen to coordinate regional conservation efforts for this butterfly. We are also lead partners in conserving two other priority species, the Monarch Butterfly and the Rusty Patched Bumblebee.

To help out one of our most effective pollinators, the Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*), we host a number of beehives on our green roof. You will see our bees hard at work when you visit our outdoor exhibits, such as *Nature Trails* and the *Woody Wickham Butterfly Garden*.
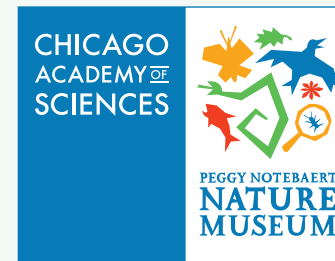
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PLANTS FOR POLLINATORS

a handy guide to starting your pollinator garden

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why a pollinator garden?

Many pollinator species have experienced population declines in recent years. You can help by providing extra food for these important animals, and in the process, create a beautiful garden alive with the fluttering and buzzing of butterflies and bees. If you're worried about stings, remember, when they are away from the hive gathering food, bees almost never sting.

Rusty Patched Bumblebee *(Bombus affinis)*

Swamp Metalmark *(Calephelis mutica)*

startin' your garden

- Choose a sunny location – at least six hours of direct sun a day – that is sheltered from the wind.

- Butterflies use sight to find food. Plant similar flowers in groups so they are easier to spot. Yellow, blue and purple flowers are especially attractive to bees.

- Bees and butterflies need water, too. Provide a shallow puddle or moist pebbles for them to drink from. Be sure to change the water frequently to prevent mosquito breeding.

- Avoid pesticide use in your garden whenever possible. Remove pests by hand, use sand to control moisture and use non-systemic pesticides such as insecticidal soap if necessary.

Regal Fritillary *(Speyeria idalia)*

The Rusty Patched Bumblebee, Regal Fritillary and Swamp Metalmark are imperiled native pollinators Nature Museum biologists work to protect.

choosing the right plants

- Many native plants are excellent nectar sources, but carefully selected non-natives can also be useful and attractive in the pollinator garden.

- Look for plants that are as close to "wild" as possible. Humans breed flowers for attractive colors and shapes, but we often inadvertently reduce nectar availability in the process.

- There are many lists of pollinator friendly plants online – some better than others. Check out our horticulturist-selected list at naturemuseum.org/top5plants.

- Don't stop with flowers – consider the trees around your home. Many of our native butterflies spend their caterpillar days feeding on trees such as willows, elms, black cherry, and hackberry.

- Consider including plants that bloom at night to attract moths, beetles and other nocturnal pollinators.

- Ensure that you will have plants in bloom throughout the season. It is especially important for many pollinators to have flowers that bloom in early spring and late fall when resources are scarce.