The **POWER** of
pollinators

There is certainly a lot of "buzz" these days about pollinators! Why should we care about them, and what we can do in our local communities, at home and on our school grounds to help them?

A pollinator is an animal that helps plants reproduce by moving pollen from one plant to another or within the same plant. Pollinators such as bees, butterflies, wasps, ants, flies, moths, birds and bats move around plants to eat nectar. At the same time, they collect pollen onto their bodies, ready to take that pollen to the next plant or a different spot on the same plant. Pollinators continue this all day long, every day! Moving pollen around is called pollination, and that helps plants produce more seeds and fruits. Plants depend on the hard work of pollinators to grow new plants, and we depend on plants to provide us with a nutritious diet!

Pollinators may be small in size, but they play a huge role in our local ecosystems. They are responsible for helping plants produce many of the foods we enjoy, including apples, pears, strawberries, blueberries, peaches, nectarines, cucumbers, squash, wildflowers and so many more. In fact, it is estimated that one out of every three mouthfuls of food on our plates is due to the efforts of pollinators.

GLOBAL CONCERN for POLLINATORS

Pollinators are facing many threats, including **habitat loss**, **disease**, use of **pesticides**, **parasite infestation** and a **rapidly changing climate**. As our climate changes, temperatures are fluctuating and water is harder to find in the summer. There's no doubt that pollinators are in trouble and need help. The good news is that there are many ways we can help them!

Planting for pollinators

The Victoria SPCA has launched a youth club garden project for pollinators. Along with the Burnside Community Centre, participants have been working on a large garden plot, themed the "BC SPCA Pollinator Garden." The plot was overgrown and waiting for some inspiration!

Before

The group chose pollinator-friendly and native plants for the garden plot. Native plants that are local to our ecosystems thrive when grouped together and create a beautiful canvas of colour. Very soon, the garden began to attract bees and butterflies. The group created resting spaces, a bee bath and so many plants for them to explore. Everyone involved had so much fun creating this pollinator paradise.

What to plant

Native plants contribute food and habitat spaces in the garden, so there is something for all pollinators to enjoy.

Some native plants to consider:

White yarrow, red columbine, sea thrift, great camas, field chickweed, larkspur, bicoloured lupines, fireweed, white fawn lily, beach pea, western St. John's wort.

St John's wort   Lavender   Chives   Calendula   Echinacea

Pollinator friendly plants:

Sedum, Echinacea, calendula, bee balm, borage, dahlias, cosmos, verbena, zinnia, hollyhocks, butterfly weed, lavender, blazing star, golden rod, joe-pye weed, globe thistle, chives.

How you can help

You can help pollinators wherever you live — at home or at school!

AT HOME:

- Plant a few native plants in your home garden.
- Make pollinator seed bombs and give them as gifts to people.
- Grow some of your own food.
- Make a shallow bee bath filled with rocks and fresh water.

Visit **spca.bc.ca/learn-at-home** for instructions on some of these projects!

AT SCHOOL:

Want to help pollinators with friends? Maybe you have a teacher at school who loves to garden? Start a Garden Club! Here are some club project ideas:

- Create a pollinator garden on your school grounds.
- Build bat houses to help bats in your community (visit **bcbats.ca** to find building plans!).
- Make a "bee hotel" and place it near a tree.
- In the spring, make "nest helpers" to assist birds with gathering materials to build their nests!

A garden can be a beautiful, restful space for people, as well as a great place to explore and learn about nature. We discover that everything is connected in some way, and that we need to take care of our environment, the animals and each other.

Check out the **BC SPCA camps this summer** to learn even more about pollinators and how we can support them.

Bark!