



## HELPING BEES, BUTTERFLIES

# Plan your garden to feed pollinators as well as for beauty

Sigrie Kendrick - May 24, 2023 / 11:00 am



Photo: Judie Steeves

Help pollinators survive by planting a diverse range of flowers that bloom from very early spring until frost.

Pollinators have great access to food during the summer months, when there is a buffet of flowers blooming on every corner and in every field and meadow. But what about food for them on either end of summer?

We need to make plant choices for our landscapes that are focussed on extending the seasonal banquet table for these vital little critters by choosing pollinator-friendly plants that provide food for them on the shoulders of summer. That should include both native and non-native xeric plants which will require little supplemental irrigation once established, so we're not wasting any of our precious resource, water.

It's estimated 90% of flowering plants need pollinators such as bees and butterflies to reproduce. That includes a third of the food we eat, such as nuts, fruit, vegetables and herbs that require insect pollination.

As we pave over wild lands and build on meadows, we destroy natural habitat and food for pollinators, so it's essential that we pay more attention to planting food sources to keep these little insects alive and thriving and reverse the current trend of their decline.

Recently the Okanagan Xeriscape Association collaborated with Kelowna Rotary Clubs on the creation of two pollinator gardens located at Sarson's Beach Park and Cameron Park in Kelowna.

These gardens have been a year in the making and it was fantastic to finally get shovels in the ground as OXA, Rotary, and Kelowna's Parks Department worked together to design and ultimately plant up these spaces.

Both were designed to have both early and late-blooming perennials to support longer access to food for pollinators.

Early bloomers in the gardens are the shrub *Amelanchier alnifolia*, commonly known as Saskatoon berry, Corsican violets and the native *Penstemon fruiticosus* or Shrubby Penstemon.

We also included several *Achillea millefolium*, known commonly as Yarrow, as studies from Simon Fraser University have shown that this perennial, which is native to the Okanagan, is by far the most appealing to the largest number of pollinators.

*Achillea millefolium* will be visited by Hairy Belly Bees, Sweat Bees, Mining Bees, Butterflies, Flies, Wasps, and Beetles.

With prompt removal of the blooms, we should get three bloom periods from the *Achillea millefolium*, as well as the *Nepeta racemosa* that we planted. It's a standout pollinator perennial.

Blooming later in the season, *Asclepias speciosa*, Showy Milkweed, will support Monarch butterflies as this perennial is a host plant for females to lay their eggs.

The exceptionally long-blooming Colorado Gold Gazania and Coronado Red Hyssop will round out the season, blooming until frost.

All of the plants selected were purchased from responsible growers as many nursery plants have been treated with toxic insecticides, known as neo-nicotinoids.

The Rotary Clubs of Kelowna have partnered with Rotary Clubs across the B.C. Interior to establish a pollinator corridor stretching from Clearwater to Osoyoos to support the growth in populations of bees, butterflies and other pollinators in our valley. Visit these public gardens to see the bee-friendly gardens in person and consider planting a pollinator garden in your own back yard to provide support for these little heroes, who are suffering from pollution and climate change.

Many of you purchased pollinator-friendly perennials at our recent OXA Spring plant sale, which was our most successful such fund-raising event yet. Thanks so much to all our purchasers, volunteers and partners for their ongoing support.

For up-to-date information on such sales and other OXA events, or to purchase a membership, go to our website at: [www.okanaganxeriscape.org](http://www.okanaganxeriscape.org)

Join the Okanagan Xeriscape Association volunteers this Friday in the West Kelowna Xeriscape Spirit Square Garden for our weekly Dig with Sig, normally held at our Kelowna UnH2O Garden, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. The West Kelowna xeriscape demonstration garden is located at the Westbank Centre Park on May Street in downtown Westbank, east of the Dairy Queen restaurant.

Dig with Sig is an opportunity to ask gardening questions, swap seeds and plants, all while making new friends, learning about xeriscape and gardening.

Follow us on social media for inspiration on the sustainable beauty that is xeriscape.

*The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is grateful for the ongoing financial support of the Okanagan Basin Water Board and is proud to be collaborating with them on their Make Water Work campaign.*

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