Pollinator Palooza

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Agenda

What today will look like

- 15 minutes
  - Pollinator overview
  - *Activity – Perfect Partners*
- 15 minutes
  - Importance of pollinators to humans
  - *Activity - Pollinator Plant Product Pair-Up!*
- 15 minutes
  - How we can help
  - *Activity – Hop To It!*

Objectives

By the end of today, we should:

- Information on pollinators including the ones found in our area as well as why they are important.

- What the Houston Zoo is doing to help pollinators

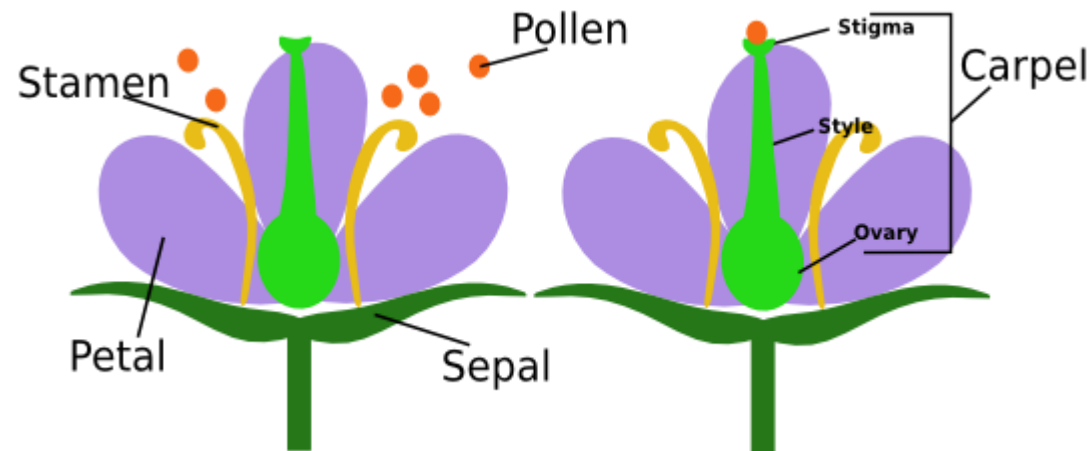- What they can do in their backyard or schools to help pollinators

Pollination

- Act of transferring pollen grains from the male anther of a flower to the female stigma.

- The goal of every living organism, including plants, is to create offspring for the next generation

Pollination

- But how does it happen?

- Sometimes accidental…

The star of the show

- Pollinators!
  - An animal that transports pollen from one plant to another
  - As plants cannot walk, run or fly; this is an extremely valuable service
    - Bees
    - Birds
    - Butterflies
    - Bats
    - Flies
    - And more!

True Texans

- Many of our pollinators have been "Texans" before there was even a Texas

- One of the best ways we can help them is with Texas plants

True Texans

- A quick word about bees, our most important pollinators:
  - European honey bees
    - Social nesters
    - Sting to defend hive
    - Introduced species
    - Imported for ecosystem services: honey and pollination

True Texans

- A quick word about bees, our most important pollinators:
  - Native bees
    - Over 1000 species in Texas & 4000 in the U.S.
    - More efficient, less picky, and better adapted than introduced species
    - Safer around people
    - 90% are solitary
    - Many don't have a stinger that penetrates skin
    - No known allergic reactions

Activity – Perfect Partners

- Two ways to play
  - For Pollinators
  - For our friends!

WE GO TOGETHER LIKE

PEAS AND CARROTS
memegenerator.net

Why care about animal pollinators?

- Pollinators sustain our ecosystems and produce our natural resources by helping plants reproduce.

Why care about animal pollinators?

- Without pollinators, agricultural economies, our food supply, and surrounding landscapes would collapse
- We have pollinators to thank for up to 30% of what we eat!

Why care about animal pollinators?

- About 87.5% of wild flowering plant species and three of four of the world's major food crops are increased by animal pollination.

Why care about animal pollinators?

- It's estimated that in the U.S., insect pollinators produce $40 billion dollars worth of products annually!

Why care about animal pollinators?

Houston Zoo

- Foods produced with help from pollinators include apples, blueberries, chocolate, coffee, melons, peaches, potatoes, vanilla, almonds, and agave nectar for tequila!

Activity – Pollinator Plant Product Pair-Up!

- Find your matches

- Complete the puzzle!

Pollinators in Trouble

- Observations from around the globe indicate the widespread loss of animal pollinators in many regions with North America as one area of particular concern.

Pollinators in Trouble

- Contributing factors to pollinator loss include climate change, pesticide use, invasive species, and especially habitat loss.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension photo

Pollinators in Trouble

- Urbanization
  - Population explosion
  - Green spaces have become 'islands'

- Think about the little guys!
  - Many of our smallest pollinators can not fly between green spaces
  - Food deserts

Hop to it!

How the Houston Zoo Helps

- Around the Zoo are pollinator friendly plants with signs identifying the type of plant.
  - *These are here for you to take pictures of and to bring to your local nursery to help you find pollinator friendly plants to place in your own garden.*

- The Houston Zoo provides habitats for pollinators through Pollinator Stations and butterfly gardens located throughout the Zoo.

How we can help - Plant those natives!

- Helping ecosystems from the ground up (literally)

- Far reaching impact from little hands

- Texans helping Texans

- Wildlife friendly practices

Pollinators in the classroom

- Gardens – no matter how big or small!
- Increasing the native plants available
- Practicing wildlife friendly habits in the garden
- Spreading the word!

Pollinator Pals!