

A PARADE OF POLLINATORS FOLLOW THE SUN



Sunny openings in our forests are hotspots for wildflowers and flowering shrubs that provide food for pollinators. In exchange, the pollinators (bees, butterflies, birds, bats, beetles, moths, wasps and ants) provide the pollen-moving labor necessary to make seeds and fruits. People reap the benefits too, because without pollination, much of the food we eat would never come to be.

POLLINATION IN A NUTSHELL

A plant pollinator moves from plant to plant and, as it forages for nectar or pollen, tiny pollen grains get stuck in its hair-like seeds stuck in your socks. As the pollinator moves on in search of more food, this pollen is brushed onto another flower's receptive female flower part, called a stigma. For fertilization to occur the pollen must come from a plant of the same species (individuals capable of interbreeding with one another). If fertilization is successful, the plant ovary (fruit) expands and the ovule grows into a mature seed. The seed, sometimes contained in a tasty fruit, is then available to us as food—if we get there first.

GARDENING FOR NATIVE POLLINATORS

This garden demonstrates the abundance of pollinators attracted to native plants of northern California and beauty of both wildflowers and pollinators. By planning and experimenting, we can grow plants with different flowering times, colors, and shapes, providing a constant supply of food for diverse pollinators throughout the growing season.

POLLINATORS: SOME ARE PICKY - SOME ARE NOT

Many pollinators are generalists; they are not very particular about which plant provides their food. Others are specialists, requiring specific plants for some part of their life cycle. For instance, Monarch butterfly caterpillars eat only milkweed, but adults use nectar from many different plants.

