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SUMMER 2021

Learn what plants attract pollinators. Try some herbal recipes.



Greetings to All

The past two springs have amazed me in many ways. Foremost, it has been interesting to see the number of people, new to gardening who have been purchasing plants. I think many people who have been working from home have decided that gardening is a great way to spend some of their time. It has really shown in our plant sales here at MBG, and nationally, nurseries and other growing establishments are having a difficult time keeping up with demand. It is a good trend because I think people who garden are also concerned about the environment, and there has never been a time in human history when that has been more important!

I really think "Climate Change" is the right term vs. "Global Warming" because of the large swings in temperature we experience now. I never expected us to have ten days below freezing last February. The damage it did to permanent plantings in our area was far-reaching. It also makes us realize that we should be wiser when we make plant selections to also consider cold hardiness as well as heat tolerance.

In line with this train of thought, our articles in this Vine Line are about growing plants for human use as well as wildlife. Sherri McCalla is always a wealth of information when it comes to growing and using herbs. Herbs are probably one of the first groups of plants that have been gathered in their native habitats by indigenous people as well as being cultivated in cottage gardens and in Medieval Monastery Gardens. Herbs are a true link with the past. They are still an integral part of cooking, medicinal, and other uses even in today's world. Jill Mabry is very talented in doing naturalistic plantings that are sure to attract birds and insects. Pollinator plants are more important than ever before, as our world has fewer spaces for these important parts in the web of life to grow and reproduce as they have since the beginning of time.



Enjoy the articles and remember that when you garden you are helping to do your part to leave the world a better place.

Have a wonderful summer,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Powell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MBG Director of Horticulture



Make Your Garden a Pollinator Paradise!

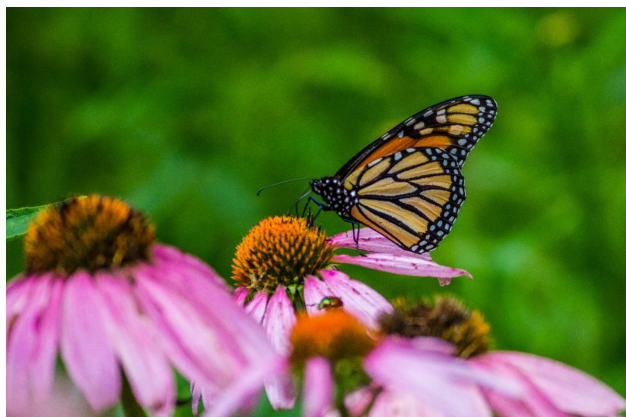
By Jill Maybry, MBG Curator of the Pollinator and Delta Gardens

Summer has officially arrived, and with it, so have the heat and humidity that characterize Memphis summers! What does this mean for our gardens? It means that the blooms of early spring flowers have come and gone. It also means that the robust plants and flowers that thrive in our summer heat have entered their prime season! If your garden is not currently bursting with heat-loving annuals and perennials, then the good news is that you can begin to add some. The even better news is that many of the plants that thrive through our summers are also excellent plants to attract and support pollinators!

Pollinator is the general term for the bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and other creatures that visit flowers and pollinate them, making it possible for the flowers to set fruits and seeds. Without them, our food chain would swiftly break down. Today, it is understood that pollinators in general face many threats, including habitat loss and the dangers of widespread chemical use. Fortunately, gardeners can take positive steps to help by choosing plants that are beneficial to the pollinators in their local areas. This can include host plants, which young insects such as butterfly caterpillars feed on, and nectar plants, which provide nutritious food in the form of pollen and nectar. Fortunately for Memphis gardeners, some of our most colorful garden flowers are also some of the best pollinator-benefitting plants around. Add several of these knockout garden performers to your yard, and not only will you be beautifying your landscape, you'll also be helping our local pollinators.

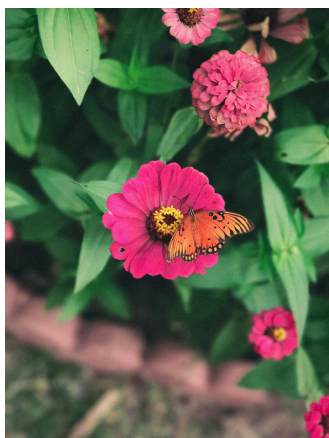
The verbena plant family offers many great garden plants. I've noticed two that butterflies are especially drawn to. Verbena 'Homestead Purple' is a low-growing, sprawling plant with large, vibrant clusters of deep purple flowers. This can be planted as a summer annual, but it can also be left in the ground over the winter, and it will often return as a hardy perennial in the spring, ready to burst forth with another season of blooms.

Brazilian Verbena is the other verbena that I love to plant for pollinators. This plant grows upright, with bunches of tiny lavender-purple flowers at the ends of long,



waving stalks. It will grow up behind and through other plants, adding airy height to the garden. Butterflies and bees will often be seen perched on the blooms.

Purple coneflower, a beautiful North American wildflower, is a hearty, colorful summer performer. Extensive breeding work has been done recently between the purple coneflower and its close relatives, resulting in some spectacular color options. One variety we've been impressed with at the MBG is called 'Cheyenne Spirit'. These plants come in a mix of sunset hues including pink, red, orange, and yellow. Some of the plants have a wonderfully sweet fragrance (an unusual trait for coneflowers), and they all attract a variety of insects. Coreopsis is another hard-working native perennial. It stays short, reaching 12-24" tall, and has small daisy-like flowers. My favorite variety to plant for pollinators is 'Route 66', a threadleaf variety that bears masses of yellow blooms generously streaked with red.



Zinnias, long term darlings of the summer garden, are excellent pollinator plants! These are annuals, so they'll need to be replanted every year, but they grow quickly and will reward you with vibrant blooms. They've been hybridized extensively, and can be purchased in nearly any shade imaginable. (Except blue!) I've become very fond of the 'Benary's Giant' strain. Each blossom reaches nearly 6" across, and the plants grow to 40-50" tall.

Another favorite annual of mine, a "must grow" every summer, is Tithonia, or Mexican sunflower. It forms a bushy clump of deep green foliage reaching 5-6' tall by mid-summer, and bears flowers of the brightest reddish-orange you can imagine. This stunner attracts not only bees and butterflies, but hummingbirds as well! Every summer I enjoy watching the feisty little birds swoop in to sip nectar from the brilliant blooms.

All of these plants will provide pollen and nectar to attract our local pollinator friends and help keep them healthy. Most will bloom all summer and into the fall with a little bit of deadheading (cutting off the spent blooms before they go to seed).



Short Course on Herbs

By Sherri McCalla, MBG Herb Garden Curator

Herbs are plants that have been used for flavor, fragrance, medicinal and healthful qualities, economic and industrial uses, pesticidal properties, and/or used as a dye. The name also can refer horticulturally to a fleshy seed bearing plant that dies to the ground over winter i.e. herbaceous. An herb usually prefers sunny, well-drained sites. Garden soil in the Mid-South can range from the naturally well-draining, rich, loess soils of the delta area to poor-draining clay pretty much everywhere else. Any potential herb grower that is NOT based along the Mississippi River should amend their soils with coarse builder's sand and plenty of organic materials such as humus and compost. There are exceptions to this statement: some herbs are actually woodland plants such as Coltsfoot. Full sun means 4-6 hours of full sun, not that it has to never get relief from the sun. Here in our area, most sun loving herbs would appreciate afternoon shade! Take the time to research the plant you have purchased, or are planning to purchase: find out its origins and you'll be able to care for it properly. Which herbs should you grow? I suggest starting with one or two that you already know you like such as basil and rosemary, or maybe chives.

Try to plant your culinary herbs near the door closest to your kitchen. You'll be more likely to walk out and snip some for dinner if you don't have to navigate the lower 40. Culinary herbs do better when frequently pinched back/harvested. Pinching will keep the herb from blooming and setting seed and make the plant bushy and full. Once basil blooms, the essential oils that give it flavor begins to decline. Use basil to toss into fresh salads, top homemade pizzas, or top store-bought pizzas to make it taste home-made. However, some plants such as Dill should be allowed to bloom and set seed if you'd like dill seeds for your pickles and vinegars. The green portions of dill can be snipped and added to potato salad, fish dishes, or cream sauces for a fresh touch. Collect handfuls of mint, basil, rosemary, sage, dill, etc. and make a fragrant, edible bouquet for your kitchen table. Snip and use the herbs straight from your bouquet – let your guests choose what they would like in their own salad.



Dandelion Pesto

- 2-4 cloves crushed garlic
- ½ cup cold pressed olive oil
- 2-3 cups young dandelion leaves (eaten all the ones from your yard? Your local grocery store may carry them), or any other culinary herb or greens you prefer
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese (optional-reduce amount of oil if you omit this)

Goat Cheese Honey Herb Log

- 1 roll goat cheese (Chevre, plain)
- Dry roasted, salted sunflower seeds
- Honey
- A good palm full of your favorite chopped herbs such as: *Tagetes lucida*, mint, basil, etc. – your preference
- Blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, strawberries (and, I suspect, fresh figs!)

- Dash of sea salt
- A squirt of lemon juice
- ¼ cup ground nuts (pine nuts are traditional, but try walnuts, pecans, filberts, etc. Try toasting the nuts for an even more amazing flavor burst)

Put all ingredients in a food processor and blend until well mixed. Serve with crackers, toast points, or vegetables for dipping.

Roll cheese in sunflower seeds (include the ends) until covered well.
 Sprinkle herb(s) of choice over all.
 Cover well with honey.
 Add berries.
 Serve with crackers.
 (adapted from a recipe from Summer Celebration in Jackson)

If this leaves you wishing for more information or recipes, please attend one of Sherri McCalla's Herbal Work Studies. The Herbal Work Study is the second Saturday of every month from 8:30 am until 11:30 am and will be canceled if it is raining. Check the Memphis Botanic Garden's Facebook or website pages to learn more about upcoming Herbal Work Studies.



Something you want to learn more about?
 Email our Director of Horticulture at
rick.pudwell@memphisbotanicgarden.com

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