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## Saving pollinators

### How to bring beneficial bees back

**B**ees, birds and butterflies play integral roles in pollinating many of the crops humans rely on for sustenance. The National Pollinator Garden Network, through the National Wildlife

Federation, recently launched the Million Pollinator Garden

Challenge, an effort to increase the amount of nectar and pollen

food sources as the organization aims to reverse the alarming decline of pollinators such as honey bees, native bees and monarch butterflies.

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Bees are beneficial for yards. Gardener's Supply Company says one out of every three bites of food

humans take depends on a pollinator. That's because about 150 crops grown in the United States depend on pollinators. Even though there are 4,000 species of native or wild bees in the continental United States, many populations are in decline. According to the Pollinator Partnership, various areas of North America have lost more than 50 percent of their managed honeybee colonies in the past 10 years.

Bringing these important pollinators back will take a little work, but it is possible.

Plants that offer cover can be attractive to bees that desire a respite from the sun and heat. Coleus and

other ground cover offerings can be handy.

- Offer water in shallow dishes, as even bees need a cool drink to stay hydrated.

- Bees like various plants, so plant more than one species. Some plants that bees tend to like include alyssum, aster, geranium, bee balm, poppies, and clover.

- When planting, include some native species.

- Brush piles, dry grasses and dead woods offer nesting areas for bees.

- The Gardener's Supply Company also says that bees find blue, purple and yellow flowers most appealing. Opt for more of these hues when planning gardens.

- Above all, avoid using pesticides in the yard. Even organic ones can be toxic to bees and other pollinators, and they may contribute to colony collapse disorder.

With these techniques in mind, homeowners can attract more bees to their yards and gardens, which can benefit bees and humans alike.

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