

Garden Update

Week of April 26

Kathleen Cue, Nebraska Extension Horticulture Educator in Dodge County

Pollinators and Pollinator Gardens

Pollinators and pollinator gardens are the focus of the next GROBigRed Virtual Learning Series. Nebraska Extension Educators in entomology and horticulture will teach participants about steps to take so pollinators thrive—both from flowers and plants important to their health to insect-friendly garden practices to implement. Why are we concerned about pollinator health? Pollinators are first and foremost critical to our food supply. Most notably, some of our favorite fruits and vegetables, like apples, peaches, cucumbers, and beans, would not exist without our pollinator friends.

Just have a balcony-sized garden space? The good news is research indicates no gardening space is too small to foster pollinator health. Your garden, when combined with the neighbor's garden, nearby creeks, and prairie spaces, add to the collective whole. So limited space excludes no one from contributing to pollinator health and this series will provide the know-how to get started.

The first class will be held May 4 at 6:30 pm. "Creating a Pollinator Habitat" focuses on design and the necessary components to include in the space, such as water, shelter, and food. Other components of the class will emphasize the need for good gardening practices, for instance when to cut back spent perennial stems and how to reduce pesticide use.

On May 11 at 6:30 pm, "Bees, Butterflies, and Beyond" will speak to the whole array of pollinators, including bees and butterflies, but also wasps, flies, and beetles and their contribution to pollination. Insect life cycles will spotlight why it is important to implement practices that save insect lives and ultimately enhance their environment.

At 6:30 pm on May 18, "Pollinator Blooms for All Seasons" will highlight outstanding plants to include in the garden, most notably for the nectar (a carbohydrate source) and pollen (a protein source) they provide to pollinators and their progeny. Having plants in bloom throughout the growing season ensures food is available to pollinators when they need it.

There is no charge for the series, but registration is necessary to receive the emailed link:

<https://go.unl.edu/pollinategardening> .