WPC

WPC'S CANADIAN

Pollinators & Gardens



GUIDE BOOKLET

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FLORAL AND BUMBLE BEE ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ANN SANDERSON

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INTRO DUCTION



Bumble bees, butterflies, birds, and bats - pollinators are the unsung heroes of our ecosystems! The quiet architects behind the food we eat, the flowers we cherish and the landscapes we love, we couldn't imagine a world without them. Facing unprecedented challenges like habitat loss, climate change and the decline of native plants, let's support these animals in one of the best ways we know how: gardening.

This book is your quick start guide to helping your local native pollinators, no matter where you are in Canada. We'll talk about native pollinators, native plants, garden planning, design tips, and we have a special space for identifying pollinator wildlife. Discover how each of us can become stewards of the wildlife around us and let's safeguard the future of Canada's wildlife.

First up : what is pollination? It's the process behind the fruits and veggies we eat every day, what allows plants to reproduce and it plays a crucial role in the every day lives of Canada's wildlife. Pollination occurs when pollen is carried from the male stamen to the female pistil or ovary, usually by a wildlife pollinator.

Although these pollinators range in size, shape, colour and species, they all play a crucial role in keeping our ecosystems afloat and all have unique ways they contribute.

This book is dedicated to Sheila Colla. A conservation biologist, author, educator, mentor, activist, and mother, Sheila is remembered as a fierce supporter of Canada's pollinators and bumble bees.

Fun fact: honey bees are not native to Canada!



2 CANADA'S POLLINATORS

Let's dive head first into what we know best: wildlife. Canada has a vast diversity of wildlife and loads of native pollinators. Let's get to know our most common pollinators and find out why they are so important.



This is a rusty-patched bumble bee. It hasn't been seen in Canada since 2009.

Fun fact: There are around 41 species of bumble bees in Canada, including the brown-belted bumble bee, tri-coloured bumble bee, and the yellow-banded bumble bee - all three of which we work with here at WPC!

BEES (ESPECIALLY BUMBLE BEES)

The queens (and kings) of pollination, there are all kinds of bees that are found throughout Canada carrying out the majority of the work. Bumble bees, with their cute, round, fuzzy bodies, make the perfect pollinators. Climbing into flowers to reach the nectar allows pollen to attach to their bodies, spreading across each plant they visit. Bumbles are also capable of buzz pollination, a unique method of vibrating the pollen loose! Goldenrod, blazing star, and asters are all great options to support our native bumble bees. We also have solitary bees, which include leafcutter bees, sweat bees, mason bees (plus so many more), who live alone and make up over 80% of the native bee species in Ontario. Many of these bees are floral specialists, foraging from a small number of plant species and making them incredibly efficient pollinators for those chosen flowers.

Finally we have to mention the elephant in the room: the well-known, non-native, honey bee. Honey bees are an introduced agricultural species, highly sought after because of their honey production and agricultural pollination. This means we won't be highlighting ways to attract honey bees in this booklet!

WASPS

The smooth, elongated relative of the bee, wasps have fine hairs on their bodies that allow them to transfer some pollen from flower to flower as they move amongst plants. Usually, these insects don't actively collect pollen or eat nectar, and instead hunt other insects. Wondering why they are always after your sweet treat when you're outside? Sugar gives them an energy boost while they're out hunting, protecting your garden from pests and keeping the ecosystem in balance. If you're looking to attract wasps to keep the pests at bay, consider planting native mountain mints or spotted joe-pye weed.



BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS

One of the most iconic pollinators after bumble bees, butterflies are always a fan favourite to attract to your garden. Some of the species you can expect to see include the Canadian tiger swallowtail, the red admiral, and the Monarch butterfly. Popular plant choices to attract butterflies include milkweed, black-eyed susan, and lupines (ones with a purple hue are the most likely to attract butterflies!).

When the day is over, moths take over the pollinator shift from butterflies. There are night-blooming plants, like the common evening primrose, that give off a special scent to attract moths, and their fluffy bodies are perfect for carrying pollen from one flower to the next. But, there are some moths who prefer to pollinate during the day, and you might confuse them for another species due to their bright colours and odd shapes, like the hummingbird clearwing moth (can you guess what it might look like based on the name?). These large moths love nectar from a wide variety of flowers, from wild bergamot to native honeysuckle!

BIRDS

If you blink you might miss them, but the sparkly little gem flitting around your garden is probably a hummingbird! The most widespread hummingbird in Canada is the ruby-throated hummingbird, easily identified by its bright red throat. If you're out west, you might be lucky enough to see the copper-coloured rufous hummingbird. These birds have specialized beaks and long tongues that allow them to feed on nectar from tubular flowers, like honeysuckle or the cardinal flower, carrying pollen along with them as they complete their visit.

Fun fact: See some spiderwebs in your garden? Leave them there! Ruby-throated hummingbirds use spiderwebs to anchor and build their nests.

FLIES

Flies probably aren't the first thing that pops into your mind when you think of pollinators you want to attract to your garden, but this diverse group of pollinators does a lot for the environment! Flies pollinate flowers that grow in shady, damp areas along with a wide variety of other native plants, including goldenrod. Hoverflies, which often look like tiny bees, are great pollinators thanks to small hairs all over their bodies that pollen sticks to as they visit flowers. If that's not enough, their larvae eat common garden pests like aphids. By attracting hoverflies, you're building your own security team for your pollinator garden! Keep them around by planting common yarrow, common boneset, or goldenrod.

POLLINATOR POINTERS

Now we know that all pollinators are not created equally. Some are active at night and some in the early morning, some like a specific group of plants while others are more generalists. Understanding these differences explains why native plants matter! Losing even one pollinator species can wreak havoc on an entire ecosystem. So let's explore some important pollinator facts before you get your hands dirty...



POLLINATION POWERHOUSES

Did you know? Ninety percent of all flowering plants can't reproduce without the help of pollinators. And those plants in turn support thousands of other species including us humans! Many of the fruit and vegetables in your fridge right now are because of wildlife. How cool is that?

SMALL ACTIONS, BIG IMPACT

Planting a native pollinator garden can have a huge impact on the wildlife around you. Whether you planted a few flowers in a pot or transformed your front lawn into a native plant paradise, you're making a difference. Don't feel discouraged if you don't see a rusty-patched bumble bee or Karner blue butterfly. All of the species matter, no matter how common.

FEAR OF STINGS

When it comes to pollinators like bees and wasps, many people fear being stung. However, the risk of being stung in your yard or garden is very low! Keep away from nests, don't swat at bees, and avoid clothing entanglement. Only a small portion of people (about 1-2% of the Canadian population) are at risk of anaphylactic shock because of a food or insect allergy. If you're unsure, keep an EpiPen on you. If you leave them alone, they will likely leave you alone.



BEE RESPONSIBLE

Creating a native pollinator garden can attract a variety of wildlife...I mean it's the whole purpose of this book! But to have a healthy relationship with wildlife, we have to make sure we are being respectful and responsible. If your garden is near a window, place stickers on it to reduce bird strikes or plant your garden further away. Don't use pesticides or herbicides and find natural solutions like companion planting or trap planting.



Pussy willow

A great early bloomer in Ontario - this could be the first source of food for bumble bees!



3 WHAT IS A POLLINATOR FRIENDLY GARDEN?

A purposefully created garden made for your local pollinators, these gardens can provide food and shelter for our pollinator neighbours - all while looking beautiful.

Pollinators rely on flowers for food, and planting with them in mind can make a real difference. Choosing native plants like the ones listed below can provide nutrition for local species. Aim to have at least one or two plant species in bloom from early spring through fall so they have a steady food supply. Avoid using pesticides in gardens and green spaces, opting instead for pollinator-friendly alternatives.

What is a native plant? A plant that has existed in the area for potentially thousands of years, adapting and evolving alongside the other flora and fauna around them. They've gotten really good at thriving in that specific soil type, climate and have even partnered up with the wildlife around it. Many native plants are actually hosts for specific pollinators and those animals cannot exist without them! Like a monarch butterfly relies on milkweed.

Plants (including native plants), can be broken into two categories: perennials (come back every year) and annuals (die off each winter). Perennials have adapted to survive winters by going dormant, while annuals have developed methods of returning next year on their own, like self-seeding.



Wild columbine

Canada goldenrod

Native plants are already accustomed to our Canadian climate, which means it is easy for anyone to start their own pit stop for pollinators. Whether you are able to make a full garden or place a single pot on your balcony, every plant supports our native pollinators!
Some common native plants that can thrive in Canada's various climates include milkweed, goldenrod, and Columbine. Be sure to check what plants are native to your area.



Swamp milkweed

4 PREPARING YOUR GARDEN

CHOOSING YOUR SPACE

It doesn't matter if you have an acre of property, are renting an apartment with no yard or really only have access to an outdoor community space, you can still have a pollinator garden! The first step is deciding what space you want to spend time in and where you want your special native pollinator garden to be.



LARGE YARD

If you have a large yard, your first step is finding the perfect spot in it. Depending on the plants you're interested in growing, you'll need to likely find a sunny, well-drained spot that receives 6+ hours of sun every day. Think about what surrounds your garden too: are there trees for wind protection or a water source for drinking? These might be the best areas to start a garden. Planting in dense patches with a variety of species and heights is also a good idea. Diversity is key here, so try and pick a mixture of plants that will allow for a continuous bloom sequence. Raised garden beds are also a great option in these larger spaces and are more wheelchair and mobility device friendly. No bending over or kneeling, and you can build them to fit your perfect height.

PORCH OR BALCONY

If your outdoor space consists mainly of a porch or balcony, you'll be primarily using pots or window baskets. Make sure you select ones with proper drainage holes in the bottom and are large enough to fit your desired plants. Grow bags can be a great substitute for pots: they are lighter to move (most come with handles too!) and offer better drainage and aeration for the plant's roots. Since you won't be planting directly in the ground, it's key you keep an eye on your plants' moisture levels, as potted plants will dry out faster. If you're high up, also consider using a trellis or screen to act as a windbreak. A spot sheltered from wind and rain is a perfect place for pollinators!

COMMUNITY GARDEN

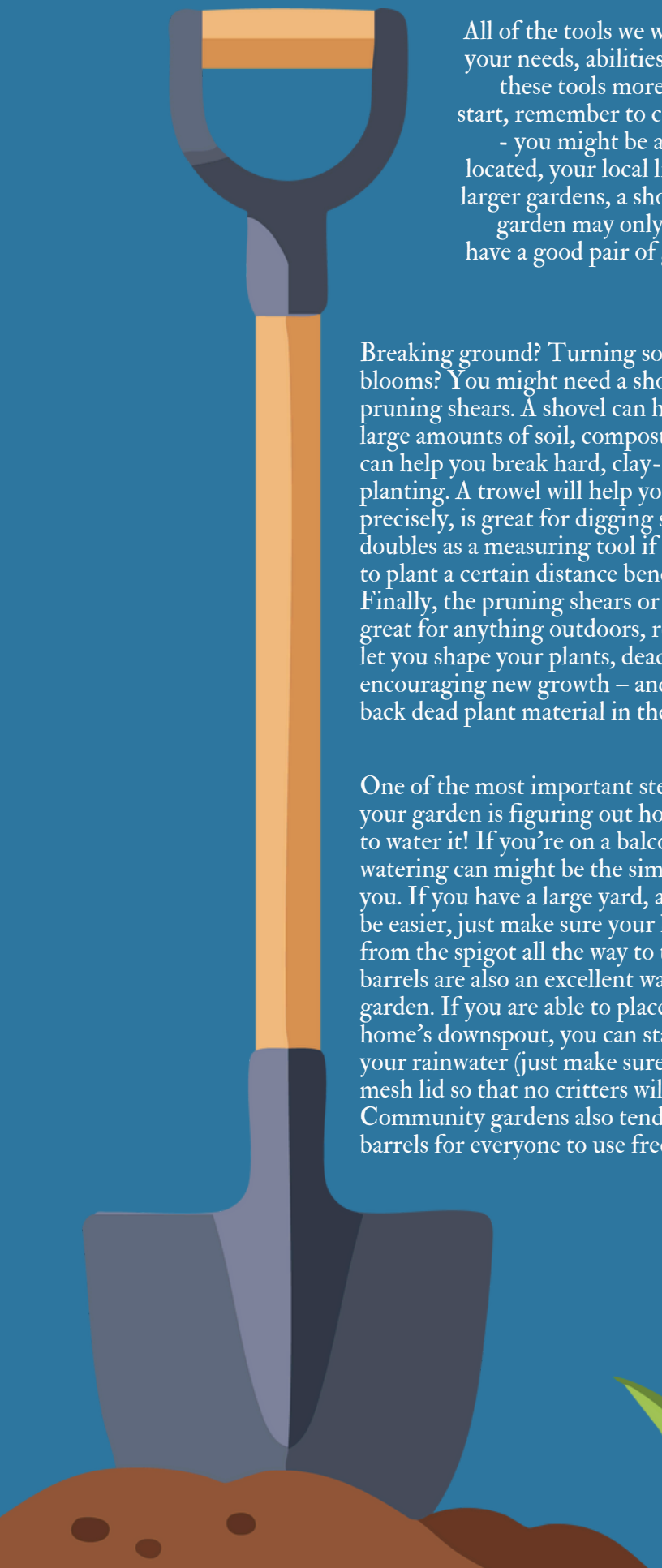
Community gardens offer small areas of land for neighbourhood gardeners to grow their own gardens. First check in with your municipality to see where you have access to these gardens. Each municipality is different with their own set of guidelines to follow. Planting a pollinator garden here will not only help the local wildlife but will help pollinate your neighbours' plots too!

SMALL YARD

Have a small yard but want to make a big impact? Plant native species in dense patches or clumps and try to grow vertically to maximize your space. Not only will this design allow for a lot of nooks and crannies for the pollinators to hide in but it will also make it easier for them to find their next stop!

TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

All of the tools we will discuss in this section are optional. Depending on your needs, abilities and what is available to you, you might find some of these tools more necessary than others. If you don't have any tools to start, remember to check-in with friends, neighbours or your family first - you might be able to borrow or share! Depending on where you are located, your local library might even have a tool borrowing system! For larger gardens, a shovel or spade could come in handy, whereas a balcony garden may only require a small trowel, or no tools at all. Is it nice to have a good pair of gardening gloves? Of course! But sometimes getting some dirt under your fingernails is the best therapy.



Breaking ground? Turning soil? Trimming old blooms? You might need a shovel, trowel and pruning shears. A shovel can help you move large amounts of soil, compost, or mulch and can help you break hard, clay-like soil while planting. A trowel will help you dig more precisely, is great for digging small holes, and doubles as a measuring tool if you are required to plant a certain distance beneath the soil! Finally, the pruning shears or garden scissors: great for anything outdoors, really. These tools let you shape your plants, dead head flowers – encouraging new growth – and help you cut back dead plant material in the fall.



One of the most important steps in planning your garden is figuring out how you're going to water it! If you're on a balcony or porch, a watering can might be the simplest solution for you. If you have a large yard, a hose will likely be easier, just make sure your hose will reach from the spigot all the way to the garden. Rain barrels are also an excellent way to water your garden. If you are able to place one under your home's downspout, you can start collecting your rainwater (just make sure to use a solid or mesh lid so that no critters will fall in). Community gardens also tend to have rain barrels for everyone to use freely!

Don't forget about your protective equipment. From gardening gloves and knee pads to a sun hat and sunscreen, protecting yourself is very important. Some other great tool options include knee boards, garden carts or scooters and rocker seats.

5 PLANTS AND REGIONS



Did you know some plants that grow really well in Nunavut might grow very poorly in Nova Scotia? That's because each region in Canada has its own soil type, climate, and wildlife that supports the growth of its native plants. Developed in the 1960s, the Government of Canada has a single map that outlines what Plant Hardiness Zone you live in. These zones are based on a few different variables including, rainfall, frost, daily temperatures, winter severity, snow and wind. These zones will help you determine what plants are native to your area and therefore what plants will grow well!

Canada's Plant Hardiness Zones range from 0a all the way to 9a. In zone 0 we see the hardiest plants because this zone covers the coldest parts of Canada. On the other end, in zone 9, we see more "temperate" varieties that are not susceptible to the cold in warmer areas of the country like Vancouver Island.

Canada has a wide range of Plant Hardiness Zones which dictate where plants will thrive. To see a full list of detailed Plant Hardiness Zones, see the next page.



6 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

So now it's time to start your garden!
Where do you begin?

After deciding how much space you have to work with for your pollinator garden, determine your hardiness zone to figure out what plants are native to your area, and are sure to thrive! If you are having difficulty identifying your zone, check some of our resources below for interactive maps and a list of native plants by zone.

After that, it's all up to you! Decide what plant layout looks best and get ready to get your hands dirty. As your plants flourish, so will your local pollinators!

To Do List

- [ ] Determine your Plant Hardiness Zone
- [ ] Find out what plants are native to your area
- [ ] Do you need any pots or equipment?
- [ ] Pick your plants and plant them
- [ ] Keep track of all the pollinators that show up!



PLANT HARDINESS ZONES

- Government of Canada: https://natural-resources.canada.ca/stories/simply-science/zone-canada-s-plant-hardiness-zone-maps-website-get-update
- Xerces Interactive Zone Map: https://www.xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center
- Native Plants for Pollinators Across Canada: https://pollinatorpartnership.ca/en/ecoregional-planting-guides

DESIGN TIPS

- Gardening without pesticides: https://issuu.com/pan-uk/docs/a_guide_to_gardening_without_pestic?e=28041656/56337362
- Creating a Wildlife Habitat/Garden at Home (from Ontario.ca, but applies anywhere!): https://www.ontario.ca/page/creating-wildlife-habitat
- Canadian Wildlife Federation - How to make the perfect pollinator garden:
- Wildlife gardening year round: https://inthezonegardens.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/WWF_ITZ_FourSeasons_Brochure_Digital_En_07.pdf
- Xerces Native Plant List: https://xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/pollinator-friendly-plant-lists

BOOKS

- A Garden for the Rusty-Patched Bumblebee: Creating Habitat for Native Pollinators *Ontario and Great Lakes Edition*
  by Lorraine Johnson and Sheila Colla, Illustrations by Ann Sanderson

WILDLIFE PRESERVATION CANADA BUMBLE RESOURCES

- Bumble Bee posters & ID Cards: https://wildlifepreservation.ca/bumble-bee-resources/



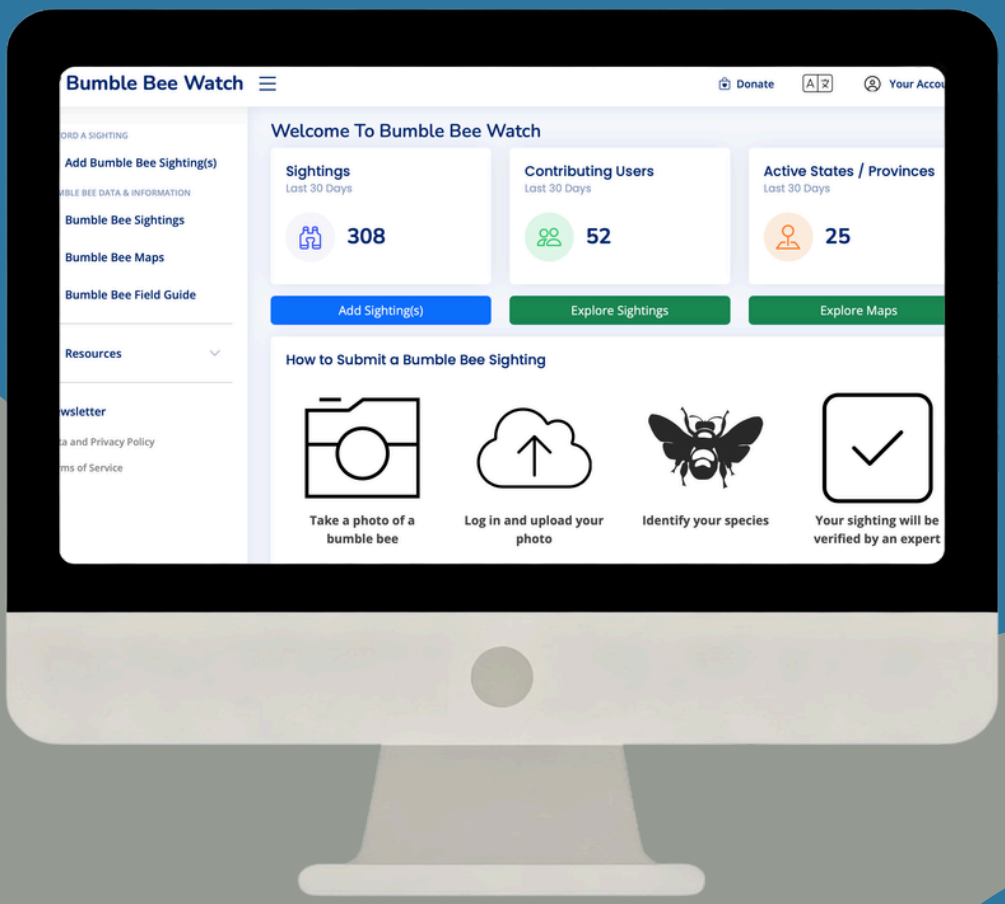
Scan to download our free bumble bee ID cards!

7 IDENTIFICATION

BUMBLE BEE WATCH

Bumble Bee Watch is a collaborative effort to track and conserve North America's bumble bees. It allows for participants to upload photos of bumble bees, have those bees identified, and supplies researchers and biologists with that data. And, it helps participants learn more about the bees around them!

Join in on the fun at bumblebeewatch.org!



Watch our "How to: Upload a Sighting to Bumble Bee Watch" here



Don't forget, WPC's Bumble Bee ID cards can help you identify the species you might see visiting your garden



iNATURALIST

iNaturalist is a free public resource that can be used to track observations of various plant and animal species to celebrate biodiversity across the globe. It can be accessed online through your internet browser or their mobile app.

8 OBSERVATIONS LOG

Use this space to write down any species you see visiting your garden. Feel free to make a table, draw a sketch, or just jot some notes. Remember to respect any wildlife that stops by your garden, admire them from a distance to avoid scaring them away and let them enjoy their nectar buffet!

July 5: Lemon cuckoo bumble bee on goldenrod

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Don't forget to tag us on socials in your pollinator garden photos!

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