



Book News

Flowers Are Calling

Would you believe! Flowers need pollinators to flourish, and pollinators need flowers for nourishment. A pollinator is any animal or insect that helps a flower to trade pollen with another flower like itself. Most flowers need to trade pollen with each other so they can make seeds. These seeds will then grow into new plants. Here are some fascinating ways flowers call to their special pollinators:

Many insects and birds see in ultraviolet light. This allows them to see nectar guides that are invisible to us. A flower that appears to us as one solid color can actually have a prominent two-toned bull's-eye at its center. This sends a loud and clear message - *Drink here!*

Some early-spring flowers create their own heat to give visiting insects a toasty room for the night. This ability to generate heat is called thermogenesis. This warmth also helps spread a flower's scent.

Some flowers of coffee, orange and grapefruit plants offer bees a shot of caffeine with their nectar. The bees like the caffeine and return to the blossoms for refills. The caffeine helps the bees to remember where they found it.

Flowers make their own electrical buzz that bees understand. This buzz can tell a bee how much nectar a flower has. In this way flowers signal to bees which flowers offer a full slurp of nectar.

Bees, birds, butterflies, moths, bats and other pollinators are some of the most important creatures on earth. When they drink the nectar of flowers and/or eat flower pollen, they help plants to make new flowers. Some of these flowers become the fruits, nuts and vegetables we eat every day. But pollinators are in trouble, and we can help. Perfectly manicured green lawns that use toxic herbicides and pesticides offer nothing to pollinators. What they need instead are long grasses, with an assortment of native species flowers. Ideally, the flowers will be lots of different colors and shapes, and bloom throughout the growing season. Even a few flowerpots or a window box can make a difference. And don't forget to include a fresh water source for your precious pollinators.

To find out how to attract pollinators in your specific area, enter your zip code at pollinator.org/guides.htm.