



What Pollinates Your Plants?

Something in the order of 200,000 species of animals serve as pollinators. Here are various pollinator categories:



Bees

The most effective pollinators, with their hairy bodies and great flying agility, bees are constantly on the lookout for bright colors, high color contrasts, and sweet smells. They cannot see red.

Generally, they must be able to land and crawl around inside the flower to get nectar. There are over 4,000 species of native bees in North America alone.

Beetles

Pollinating beetles generally eat flower parts and pollen, so many of the plants they visit must produce copious amounts of pollen. Beetles are also attracted to spicy or fruity odors, and need a wide opening to accommodate their clumsy flight.



Flies

Many flower and bee flies are attracted to sweet-smelling and odorless flowers with light, usually dull colors. Blue bottle flies, or other carrion-feeders, would

more likely be attracted to dark brown, green, or purple flowers.



Birds

Hummingbirds are probably the best-known bird pollinators in North America. They generally seek out

vivid scarlet or orange flowers. With their long beaks and very effective brushy tongues, they can easily reach up into flowers with long tubes.



Butterflies and Moths

Butterflies must have a place to land on the flowers they visit, so they prefer flat-faced types. Since they have long proboscises (tongues), they are able to retrieve nectar from deep within the flower. As moths are generally active at night, the pale or white flowers they seek open after nightfall. Generally, moth-pollinated flowers emit strong, heavy odors.

Bats

As with moths, nectar-eating bats are attracted to pale or white flowers that are open at night. The flowers these bats seek, like those of the



agave plant and many species of tall cacti, usually contain a large amount of nectar and emit a strong, musky, or fruity odor.