



## Buzzin' the Rogue Buzzway

Kristina Lefever, Master Gardener 2016



*Pollinators are as important as sunlight, rain, and soil fertility, for the health of both human lives and natural ecosystems.*



**B**y definition, a gardener tends a garden, whether large or small, at home or in a community plot, or filled with veggies, flowers, or succulents. Recently, pollinator plants have become a favorite addition to gardens, because people are realizing that the best way to save the bees and butterflies is to grow pollinator gardens.

There are two primary reasons for the critical decline of bees and other insects over the past 20 years. The most obvious reason is the disappearing landscape—previously rural lands have become cultivated, developed, or paved over, and with urban infill, fewer and fewer in-town 'wild' areas remain. Less landscape means less flowers and plants the pollinators need to survive. And, not surprisingly, the plants that get planted in a human-landscape tend to

be similar, so the diversity of our native species is being lost.

In tandem with the 'neat' landscape philosophy is the use of pesticides: herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, miticides, and more, to keep our streets, roadsides, lawns, pets, and gardens weed and insect free. All of these synthetic products will harm pollinators in some way.

So, it is more critical than ever to grow pesticide-free, pollinator-friendly landscapes to provide much needed food and habitat for insects, birds, and other wildlife. Trees, shrubs, and other plants that bloom throughout the year, as well as water, mud, and bare areas, are all important for these pollinating insects that feed us and so many of the critters with whom we share the planet.

Native plants are best, including trees, shrubs, perennial, and annual flowers. Although native plants do not usually have the long blooming season that we enjoy with hybrids, natives offer these important insects the best nutritional bang for the buck. Not to mention that many butterflies and moths require certain native plants as host plants (where they lay their eggs).

And, most gardeners know other gardeners, which brings us to the concept of connectivity. Pollinator habitats in relatively close proximity give bees, butterflies, beetles, flies, moths, and birds "corridors" in which to move and find sustenance and shelter and insure species diversity and healthy populations. Connectivity is what the Rogue Buzzway is all about, an innovative project that is mapping the location of pollinator habitats throughout the Valley. The gardens at Extension are on the map! But more data is needed! Does your pollinator landscape qualify? Let's get as many Jackson County Master Gardener pollinator gardens on the map as we can!

To learn more about the project and see the most up-to-date versions of the Rogue Buzzway map, click here [www.pollinatorprojectrogu山谷.org/rogue-buzzway-project](http://www.pollinatorprojectrogu山谷.org/rogue-buzzway-project)

Looking for ideas for pollinator plants? Check out these lists at <https://www.pollinatorprojectrogu山谷.org/resources>.

Thank you for supporting the pollinators!

— Kristina Lefever is a member of Pollinator Project Rogue Valley, Bee City USA Ashland, and the Jackson County Master Gardeners Association.