Pollinator Sanctuaries Create Huge Benefits

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There is a strong argument for landowners to plant combinations of local annual and/or perennial crops and wildflowers with overlapping flowering periods to establish pollinator sanctuaries.

Native insect pollinators around the globe are in alarming decline due to multiple factors that rapid transformed our land use patterns and aggressive industrial agricultural policies and practices such as agricultural pesticides, pollution, climate change, disease and habitat degradation.

Conservation of native insect pollinators is important to agriculture, apiculture and forestry as they pollinate several important food and industrial crops.

There is a dire need for comprehensive conservation efforts to save all pollinators through our earnest support and initiatives for their survival.

We need to acknowledge the fact that pollinators are essential in the success of sustainable crop production. Global food supply and ecosystems rely on them for successful reproduction

The significant loss of crops across the planet due to the lack natural of pollination services is a serious threat for maintaining the balance of our natural ecosystems and safe guarding our global economy.

There is a way to slow or even stop the loss of insect pollinators, like honeybees and native bees, through championing pollinator sanctuaries across the countryside.

Recently, Farming Smarter, a southern Alberta applied agriculture research association, initiated a new experimental model in the successful conservation of local insect pollinators with special emphasis to honeybees and native bees.

The Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) program funded a study to highlight the importance of using various combinations of local annual and/or perennial crops and wildflowers with overlapping flowering periods to establish pollinator sanctuaries for local pollinators.

The experimental plots received no irrigation, fertilizer or pesticide applications throughout the experiment.

The results strongly favour use of annual/perennial crop mixes with different overlapping flowering periods for successfully extending bee foraging period with adequate supply of nectar and pollens.

Such multiple crop-based pollinator sanctuaries establish pockets of habitat, conserve insect pollinators and enrich local biodiversity. They become local pollination service providers.

They can also serve as grazing pastures or cover crops, help in soil reclamation and prevent soil erosion.

This new conservation model with low cost and low maintenance could serve as a model for other provinces across the country with different agro-climatic conditions.

The Farming Smarter project demonstrated the effectiveness of pollinator sanctuaries and the value of establishing them marginal lands in rural and urban settings. It was a one-year project, but its success suggests further study could benefit pollinators and everything that relies on them for success.

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