

How to use Dr. Robert Gegear's recommended plant list

As an author and entomologist, Doug Tallamy tells us, "WE ARE NATURE'S BEST HOPE!" Follow these directions and help prevent at-risk bumblebees from disappearing from our landscape -- forever!

UNDERSTAND THE NEED

Bumblebees need blooming trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants that provide both pollen and nectar from the time they emerge in the spring until they hibernate in the fall. Bumblebees need pollen to feed their offspring from spring through fall. Adult foraging bumblebees can only live 48 hours without nectar. No pollen means no next generation, and no nectar means adults will starve to death. Thus, making sure you have both pollen and nectar bearing plants available for the entire season is critical!

COMPARE THE LIST

Inventory what you already have on your property from the list. Make a simple chart. Note if the plants you have provide nectar or pollen (or both), and when they bloom. Then, fill in the gaps of blooming time with the plants from Dr. Gegear's lists. Ensure you have both a pollen plant and a nectar plant from the list so that one from each category is in bloom the entire season.

HOW TO ACQUIRE PLANTS

All plants should be straight species. Avoid cultivars unless they are the only option. Make sure the nursery does not use neonicotinoids for pest control. Source plants using NPTF resources posted on our website under "Pollination Preservation Garden Toolkit." Know that it takes commitment to acquire all of the plants for a Pollination Preservation Garden. Check out native plant sales and seed share events. Know that nurseries tend to have plants available only during their bloom times (if the nursery carries it). You may still need to make spring, summer, and fall purchases.

WHY THESE PARTICULAR PLANTS?

Research has shown these plants will help at-risk native pollinators. Dr. Gegear researches the interactions between pollinating animals and plants, or the pollination system. He records the plants that various bumblebee species visit, especially the ones that are at-risk. His research is showing that bumblebees have an evolutionary preference for native plants, and that different species of bumblebees have requirements based on their tongue length. Even species with similar tongue lengths have their own specific preferences. The native plant finder list is based on Dr. Gegear's scientific research with study sites right here in MetroWest.

To learn more about the science of pollination systems in clear, understandable language, and why planting for at-risk species of bumblebees is so critical, please view the resource library on our website..

You are Nature's Best Hope!