

Life is disappearing from our own backyards.

Is it the last days of the frogs, songbirds, swallows, bats, butterflies and bumblebees? We are sadly witnessing a decline in numbers of once common critters found in our backyards.

The beautiful and buzzing mixed-wood Acadian forest of the Maritimes is dependent on pollinators such as bumblebees. The native black cherry and basswood trees require insect pollination, as do native shrubs such as hazelnut and staghorn sumac, native flowers such as spring beauty and trilliums, and native berries such as blueberries and cranberries.

Scientists point to habitat destruction, pesticides, pollution, parasites, viruses and climate change as likely reasons for continuing declines in the diversity and abundance of insect pollinators such as bumblebees in eastern Canada.

Why should we care?

World-renowned biologist, E.O. Wilson, said:

"It's the little things in this world – literally at our feet, or buzzing around our heads – that keep us alive."

Did you know?

- ◆ Three-quarters of a typical North-American diet depends on pollination.
- ◆ Blueberries are New Brunswick's second-largest cash crop



after potatoes. New Brunswick blueberry growers earned \$19.8 million in 2008. Blueberries are most efficiently pollinated by native pollinators such as bumblebees.



A feast for the bees!

Planting bee-friendly gardens of nectar and pollen-producing plants is critical for the survival of the bumblebees. Wildflowers are disappearing under pavement and gardens are being planted with exotic and hybrid species that produce little or no nectar and pollen. Bumblebees eat only nectar and pollen. They depend on different kinds of flowers from March to September.

Bumblebees like marsh marigolds, golden ragworts and harlequin blue flags in the early growing season, and brown-eyed susans, flat-topped asters, and wild bergamot in the late growing season. Bumblebees are also attracted to goldenrod, roses and sunflowers. Don't be afraid to make your garden a little messy. Dead snags and leaf litter provide ground nesting sites while plants provide food and shelter for our pollinators.



Pinch off a piece and roll in the palm of your hands until round and smooth. After the seed bombs are made, dry the seed bombs for 24 hours to harden and protect the seeds inside.

Seed bombs can be made by mixing 1 part mixed wildflower seeds and 3 parts compost. Add 5 parts red powdered clay and mix. Add 2 parts water, a little at a time. Mix well with your hands until the mixture sticks together.

How do I make a seed bomb?

The Conservation Council of New Brunswick, a long time defender of natural ecosystems and local agriculture, is working to protect our native pollinators and our food security. 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity. This is the year that we must act on the biodiversity crisis. It's time to halt and reverse the downward spiral of our live-giving species and ecosystems. Our Backyard Bee Box Project, which includes these seed bombs, is an attempt to increase numbers and diversity of native insect pollinators by planting pollinator-friendly New Brunswick wildflowers in urban areas. Plant your seed bombs in your garden, backyard or in neglected patches of land in your neighbourhood. The seed bombs can be stored for several months in a cool and ventilated place. Seed bombs can be tossed on the surface of the ground 1 square foot apart. Water the seed bombs frequently to dissolve them and encourage seed germination and growth.

Take Action!

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Contact the
Conservation Council at
506 458-8747 or
forest@conservationcouncil.ca

Bee-friendly Seed Bomb



Conservation Council of New Brunswick
Conseil de conservation du Nouveau-Brunswick
www.conservationcouncil.ca