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My Green Cranford E-News



Top 5 Ways to Help Pollinators

Did you know that one out of every third bite of food comes to us thanks to pollinators? From beautiful butterflies to busy bees, it's clear that pollinators are essential to life on our planet.

But, declines in pollinators in North America and around the world pose what could be a significant threat to biodiversity, global food webs and human health.

Help pollinators in your neighborhood by taking one or more of these five simple actions:

1. [Use Native Plants](#)
2. [Hang Hummingbird Feeders](#)
3. [Build a Bee House](#)
4. [Plant a Butterfly Garden](#)
5. [Certify Your Yard with National Wildlife Federation](#)

Eat Local

When we shop at the grocery store

"Green Team" meeting to be held July 20th.

On June 24, the Green Team held the first "Green Drinks" event. The idea behind this event is simple. Invite individuals who have an interest in environmental issues to an informal get together and talk about ways we could all help improve our town and our planet. Based on the enthusiasm of those who attended, we are declaring the event a success. We would like to thank Kilkenny's for hosting the event.

Since that historic evening, we have doubled the number of people interested in Cranford's Green Team and some of those who attended have already started doing research on initiatives they would like to start. Some ideas include: increased bicycle use (and decreased car use), increased plantings, both trees and gardens, community outreach, and more.

These initiatives will be presented at our first Green Team meeting on Monday, July 20th at the Community Center, 7:30 PM. If you would like to find out more about the Green Team or would like to get involved, we invite you to attend. Each initiative will require a Green Team sub committee and you can choose the committee that fits your skills and interests.

For more information, call Mary Reilly at 908-967-6044.

EarthTalk™ From the Editors of E/The Environmental Magazine

Q: What effects do fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides used on residential lawns or on farms have on nearby water bodies like rivers, streams—or even the ocean for those of us who live near the shore?

With the advent of the so-called Green Revolution in the second half of the 20th century—when farmers began to use technological advances to boost yields—synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides became commonplace around the world not only on farms, but in backyard gardens and on front lawns as well.

today, we don't bat an eye at the sight of strawberries in the winter or perfect tomatoes from Holland. In the space of a generation, we've become accustomed to eating food that's never grown roots in local soil. In fact, most produce grown in the United States travels an average of 1,500 miles before it gets sold.

Trucking, shipping and flying in food from around the country and the globe takes a toll on the environment and on public health. Take grapes, for example. Every year, nearly 270 million pounds of grapes arrive in California, most of them shipped from Chile to the Port of Los Angeles. Their 5,900 mile journey in cargo ships and trucks releases 7,000 tons of global warming pollution each year, and enough air pollution to cause dozens of asthma attacks and hundreds of missed school days in California.

The way we eat has an enormous impact on the health of the planet. By choosing to eat lower on the food chain, and focusing on local and organic produce, we can curb global warming and air pollution, avoid toxic pesticides, support local farmers and enjoy fresh, tasty food.

Find out what's fresh and ripe where you live, right now. [Learn More](#)

These chemicals, many of which were developed in the lab and are petroleum-based, have allowed farmers and gardeners of every stripe to exercise greater control over the plants they want to grow by enriching the immediate environment and warding off pests. But such benefits haven't come without environmental costs—namely the wholesale pollution of most of our streams, rivers, ponds, lakes and even coastal areas, as these synthetic chemicals run-off into the nearby waterways.

When the excess nutrients from all the fertilizer we use runs off into our waterways, they cause algae blooms sometimes big enough to make waterways impassable. When the algae die, they sink to the bottom and decompose in a process that removes oxygen from the water. Fish and other aquatic species can't survive in these so-called "dead zones" and so they die or move on to greener underwater pastures.

A related issue is the poisoning of aquatic life. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Americans alone churn through 75 million pounds of pesticides each year to keep the bugs off their peapods and petunias. When those chemicals get into waterways, fish ingest them and become diseased. Humans who eat diseased fish can themselves become ill, completing the circle wrought by pollution.

A 2007 study of pollution in rivers around Portland, Oregon found that wild salmon there are swimming around with dozens of synthetic chemicals in their systems. Another recent study from Indiana found that a variety of corn genetically engineered to produce the insecticide Bt is having toxic effects on non-target aquatic insects, including caddis flies, a major food source for fish and frogs.

The solution, of course, is to go organic, both at home and on the farm. According to the Organic Trade Association, organic farmers and gardeners use composted manure and other natural materials, as well as crop rotation, to help improve soil fertility, rather than synthetic fertilizers that can result in an overabundance of nutrients. As a result, these practices protect ground water supplies and avoid runoff of chemicals that can cause dead zones and poisoned aquatic life.

There is now a large variety of organic fertilizer available commercially, as well as many ways to keep pests at bay without resorting to harsh synthetic chemicals. A wealth of information on growing greener can be found online: Check out OrganicGardeningGuru.com and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Alternative Farming System Information Center, for starters. Those interested in face-to-face advice should consult with a master gardener at a local nursery that specializes in organic gardening.

CONTACTS: CDC, www.cdc.gov; *Organic Gardening Guru*, www.organicgardeningguru.com; *USDA's Alternative Farming System Information Center*,

www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/ofp/ofp.shtml

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