

## **Pollinator Conservation Program and Pollinator Power Youth Poster Contest**

All pollinators are important for our food supply, gardens, for our wellbeing, and the health of the planet. We need to protect all pollinators by being responsible stewards in our gardening practices. The WSFGC Conservation Pledge states we will "... protect and conserve the natural resources of the planet Earth and promise to promote education so that we may become caretakers of our air, water, forest, land, and wildlife."

Washington State Federation of Garden Club has programs to help encourage this mission of protection. One of these programs is the Pollinator Conservation Program and Pollinator Power Youth Poster Contest. Each fiscal year a new pollinator is chosen on which we focus and learn about. Our members and youth may be excited to learn about the new pollinator we will focus on for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

The Pollinator Conservation Program and Pollinator Power Youth Poster Contest have focused on Bats, and we became batty about Bats. We concentrated this past year on Bees and became the Bees Knees. Our next highlighted pollinator for the Pollinator Conservation Program and Pollinator Power Youth Poster Contest will be Beetles.

Before you step on that Beetle crawling across your sidewalk think again, this ancient creature is actually beneficial for your garden and our planet. Beetles do their work by consuming discarded vegetation from flower petals to every other part of that plant. During this activity they create tunnels in the dirt there by aerating it to provide plants with friable soil for plants. Friable soil loams are loose, crumbly and allow oxygen to reach plant roots. Loam is a perfect growing medium for seeds and established plants.

As Beetles eat their way through your garden beds, they leave behind valuable pollen and fertilizer. These humble workers remove unwanted or dying plant parts and keep your garden tidy and healthy. They especially like plants that have flowers that open in the daylight.

The Beetle relies on their sense of smell and not sight for locating food and for finding a place to lay their eggs. According to fossil records, Beetles walked among dinosaurs as both first appeared during the Mesozoic era. Beetles have been on this earth since the Age of Reptiles about 200 million years ago.

The ancient Egyptians revered the Beetle. The Beetle was a symbol of renewal and rebirth or resurrection. You can find Beetle motifs in the tombs of pharaohs, on their jewelry and artwork. This Beetle was often depicted as Egyptian god Khepri or as the morning sun.

It is awesome that this tiny pollinator, the Beetle, is still walking the earth while the mighty dinosaur is no longer. Today the Beetles are working to keep the planet clean of rotting vegetation and helping to keep soil well fertilized.

Learn more about the amazing Beetle. Encourage others to protect and learn about them. The National Garden Club offers a publication, Pollinator Power, which is designed for youth.

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