

C O U N T R Y V I E W S

PROMOTING POLLINATORS

Pollinators are in decline across North America. That's bad news for the 100 crop species that require a visit from a pollinator. You can help butterflies, bumble bees, humming birds, and other pollinators by planting some pollinator-friendly habitat. "Turn a fence row or some of your lawn into a butterfly garden," recommends Laurie Adams, executive director of the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign. "It's best to plant native species that will attract pollinators who live in your area. Plant diversity is also key. Choose species that will provide a long flowering season and a variety of blossom sizes."

Suggestions. For regional planting suggestions that may work in your area and other ideas, check out www.pollinator.org. ■

PREVENTING POND ALGAE

If you've ever searched for a way to control algae in a pond you may have heard about barley straw. It has been touted as the low-impact way to clean up a green pond. But does it work? "It depends" is the definitive answer from Steve McComas, a lake and pond consultant with Blue Water Science in St. Paul, Minn. "Our research shows barley straw can control the pea-green soup type of algae," states McComas. "However, we haven't seen similar control of the filamentous algae—the thick floating mat you see on some ponds."

Microbes. McComas notes that not everyone gets good results and he has some ideas why. "Because barley straw is deficient in phosphorus, the microbes that break it down draw phosphorus out of the pond water. We believe it is this reduction of phosphorus that inhibits algae growth. However, if the pond water is too high in phosphorus, the decomposing straw may have little impact on the algae."

Studies also show that barley straw is better at preventing algae growth than killing existing algae, so a spring application of straw is best. Check out <http://www.btny.purdue.edu/pubs/APM/APM-1-W.pdf> for rates and techniques. ■

KITTEN SEASON

Spring is kitten season in many parts of the countryside. And as cute as the little rascals may be, today's little kittens can start producing more kittens in as few as six months! That's why Nancy Peterson, feral cat program manager with The Humane Society of United States, recommends you spay or neuter your kittens early. "When your kitten is getting that rabies shot at 4-months of age," advises Peterson, "make the appointment to have the kitten spayed or neutered a few weeks later. Don't wait and put it off."

Early sterilization. Besides preventing an over-abundance of new kittens, early sterilization has other advantages. "It reduces the likelihood that male cats will spray to mark their territory," Peterson notes, "and helps prevent cancer of the reproductive organs." ■



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"A cat can have a dozen or more kittens in a single year."
—Nancy Peterson,
Feral Cat Program
Manager at the The
Humane Society



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