

IF WE COULD SEE THE MIRACLE OF  
A SINGLE FLOWER CLEARLY, OUR  
WHOLE LIFE WOULD CHANGE.

—Siddharta Gautama,  
the founder of Buddhism

Photo Leah Lewis

## Are pollinators in trouble?

Worldwide there is disturbing evidence that pollinating animals have suffered from loss of habitat, pesticides, invasion of non-native plant and animal species, diseases and parasites.

- The U.S. has lost over 50 percent of its managed honeybee colonies over the past 20 years.
- Many pollinators are federally “listed species,” meaning that there is evidence of their disappearance in natural areas.

## Why should our sangha care about pollinators?

Pollinators bring us nearly one of every three bites of food we eat and are vital in the procreation of nearly 80 percent of the flowering plants on the planet. Worldwide, roughly 1,000 of the 1,200 plant species grown for food, beverages, fibers, spices, and medicines need to be pollinated by animals. These foods include apples, blueberries, chocolate, coffee, melons, peaches, pumpkins, vanilla, and almonds. In fact, in the U.S., pollination by honey bees, native bees, and other insects produces \$40 billion worth of products annually.

The North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) is a collaborative body of over 140 organizations that work for the protection of pollinators across Mexico, Canada and the United States.

The **NAPPC Faith Task Force** produced this brochure. Feedback is welcome. For more information please call 415-362-1137 or visit [www.pollinator.org](http://www.pollinator.org).

# Buddhism and Pollinators

Photo Leah Lewis

## Our sangha and pollinators

The Buddhist path to understanding is a deliberate undertaking of the Middle Path – a way of balance and wisdom. Nowhere is balance more evident than in the natural world where every species has its role within the larger pattern of life. Every being is connected in this pattern. A perfect example of this interconnectedness is pollinators.

Pollination happens when pollen is carried from flower to flower by wind, water, or pollinating animals such as birds, bees, bats, butterflies, moths and beetles. Without the steady work of pollinators, we would not have many of the flowers that herald the fruits and vegetables which keep us nourished on our path through life on Earth.

BECAUSE WE ALL SHARE THIS  
SMALL PLANET EARTH, WE HAVE  
TO LIVE IN HARMONY AND PEACE  
WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH  
NATURE. THAT IS NOT JUST A  
DREAM, BUT A NECESSITY.

– His Holiness, The 14th Dalai Lama

Please visit  
[www.pollinator.org](http://www.pollinator.org)  
[www.thetributaryfund.org](http://www.thetributaryfund.org)  
to see how much you can do.



NAPPC

**POLLINATOR  
PARTNERSHIP**

## Helping Pollinators Through Faith

Prepared by the  
Faith Task Force of the  
North American Pollinator Protection  
Campaign (NAPPC)



# How to get involved

There are many things your community can do to help pollinators. Here are a few ideas...

- Monastery grounds offer a great place to plant a pollinator garden to attract and offer habitat for pollinators. Gardens allow adequate food, shelter, and water sources. You can introduce a diversity of plants to support a variety of pollinators. Flowers of different color, fragrance, height and season of bloom will attract different pollinator species and provide pollen and nectar throughout the seasons.
- For more ideas on gardens: [www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/gardening.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/gardening.shtml)
- Research and select plants that provide nectar and larval food for pollinators. Access the free Ecoregional Pollinator Planting Guide: [www.pollinator.org/guides.htm](http://www.pollinator.org/guides.htm)
- Plant, water and observe your garden. Notice pollinators that visit and note the flowers that they like. Share your observations with [www.pollinator.org](http://www.pollinator.org)
- Build bee boxes to encourage solitary, nonaggressive bees to nest on monastery property. For instructions on building bee boxes: [www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/beebox.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/beebox.shtml)
- Have a pollinator-themed event. Celebrate food, flowers, biodiversity, and the harmonious interweaving of life on Earth. Talk about healthy gardening practices and the benefits of locally produced foods.
- Suggest to your sangha a reduction in pesticide use and ideas for substituting flowerbeds and native grasses for lawns.

# Buddha and the bees

Buddhist texts note that from a multitude of living things, bees and other pollinating animals take what they need to survive without harming the beauty and vitality of their source of sustenance. For humans, to act in the manner of bees is an enactment of compassionate and conscious living.

AS A BEE GATHERS HONEY  
FROM THE FLOWER WITHOUT  
INJURING ITS COLOR OR FRAGRANCE,  
EVEN SO THE SAGE GOES ON HIS  
ALMS-ROUND IN THE VILLAGE.

—The Dhammapada, Ch. 4, v. 49

Honey gave nourishment to the Buddha in several times of need, including the two meals he took immediately preceding and following his enlightenment.



You may also be interested in the following brochures available at [www.pollinator.org](http://www.pollinator.org)

- **Protecting Monarchs**
- **Solving Your Pest Problems Without Harming Pollinators**
- **Your School and Pollinators**

When the Buddha observed rites in the Parilyeyok forest, a monkey brought him a beehive rich with nourishing honey. When the Buddha accepted his gift, the monkey was so overcome by elation that he fell from a tree, to his death. His joy was remembered, however, in the naming of the month that he died: Madhu Purnima, which means “honey full moon.” To this day Madhu Purnima is celebrated in Bangladesh and India by gifts of honey and fruit—both products of the bees’ labor—to Buddhist monasteries.

