

Pollinators and Colors

Take a close look at this sign that was designed by an artist at the Fernbank Science Center. In order to qualify for the designation of certified pollinator garden, one has to show evidence of providing for the needs of pollinators in a garden. This sign offers a lot of clues as to what a pollinator garden needs.

Look at the sign first to determine some of the many pollinators that exist.

1. spiders
2. bumblebees
3. bats
4. moths
5. butterflies
6. wasps
7. hummingbirds
8. beetles
9. honeybees

Pollinators and plants co-evolved over time to share resources.

10. What is the shape of the flower or petals that hummingbirds need?

Tubular flowers fit their long beaks. They have long proboscis (tongues that uncurl to reach the nectar).

11. What is the shape of the flowers or petals that the butterflies need?

Flat petals, so the butterfly has a landing pad to rest while nectaring.

Notice the color of the flowers in the sign. What color attracts hummingbirds?

Red. Hummingbirds can see red and are attracted to this color as well as orange and pink. Many insects can't see the color red and therefore distinguish red flowers from the surrounding green leaves. What color flowers attract butterflies? Yellow as well as other colors.

12. What is the bee doing on the yellow flower?

The bee is pollinating the flower. He is attracted to the flower because of its scent, shape, and pollen. He is gathering food from the flower (nectar and pollen).

13. Why are the monarch butterflies shown flying over Georgia on the sign?

Monarch butterflies migrate every year to Mexico in the fall where they will stay for the winter months. In the spring, the monarchs will migrate back from Mexico, traveling to different parts of the United States and as far as Canada. Georgia is part of the flight path of the monarch butterflies in the fall and spring. Monarch butterflies depend on the milkweed plant as their host plant, so it is important that they find this plant along their migratory route.