



SUMMER | Critters

Pollinators: Spreading the News (Pollen)

Summary:

Butterflies are one kind of critter that helps to pollinate plants in our gardens. Butterflies are found on every continent except for Antarctica, meaning they are all around us!

Before Visiting the Garden:

Gather: White paper, coloring crayons, markers, or colored pencils, and a magnifying glass

Explore: Maps—an atlas, subway timetable, street map, and/or a map app

Read: *A Monarch Butterfly's Life* by John Himmelman

In the Garden:

Butterflies help keep the plants in our garden healthy by aiding in the pollination process; moving pollen produced in the male, anther, part of the flower to the female, pistil, part of the flower. The pollen may fertilize eggs in the pistil to create seeds. Butterflies are not as efficient as bees at moving pollen between plants due to the shape of their bodies, but they are still very important. They can travel long distances, pollinate during the day, and have particular kinds of flowers that they like best. Butterflies are attracted to clusters of small, brightly colored (red, yellow, orange), open during the day, nectar-producing flowers.

Questions to Explore:

- Knowing what butterflies prefer, what area of our garden do you think these pollinators will prefer?
- Describe the areas you think will be attractive to butterflies.
- Test your hypothesis. Did you find any butterflies in the garden? How many were there? And where?
- What patterns of movement, if any, do you see as butterflies pollinate the garden?

Activity:

1. Using the white paper and coloring utensils, have your gardener draw a map of the garden. Make sure to include different features like the types of plants, any watering spots, and other details.
2. Once you have worked together to create a functional map, identify the spots you found butterflies today or think butterflies would like.
3. Using red, orange, or yellow coloring utensils have your gardener draw the path of the butterflies in the garden throughout the garden.
4. Try returning to the garden every few days with your map to check in on your pollinators. On the days when you see lots of butterflies, make a note about the weather and plant conditions. Track your pollinators over the course of a month. What do you notice?

Beyond the Garden | Adopt a Pollinator

Butterflies are one of our pollinators but there are many other busy workers in our gardeners. Bees and hummingbirds are other pollinators, to name just a few. Pick a pollinator you would like to adopt, seek out facts about their habitats and food preferences, and make a plan for helping them thrive in your neighborhood. Use the links below to discover more resources!

Continue Exploring | Supporting Materials

World maps of butterfly migration: http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/Monarch_Butterfly/migration/index.shtml

Pollinator Resources: <https://www.nwf.org/Pollinators.aspx>