

# GATEWAY FROM HOME

## Pollinator Feeders

**Pollination**, or **movement of pollen between flowers**, is an essential part of life on Earth. Without pollination, the vast majority of plants would not be able to produce the **fruits and seeds** that they use to reproduce and that we depend on as food! **Bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, ants, birds, bats, and small mammals** are all important **pollinators** for many plants, moving pollen from flower to flower as they collect nectar or other resources for food.

How can you support the pollinators in your area? Flowers (especially those of native plants) provide pollen and nectar for pollinators to use as food, but just like us, pollinators need more than just food to survive. They also need **water, minerals, and a place to rest!** In this activity, learn to build **bee and butterfly stations** that will attract these busy visitors to the habitat in your own environment.



A bath provides essential water for bees



Salt licks and fruit give butterflies extra nutrients

## Bee Bath

Native bees need water to drink, mix into mud to create solitary nests in the ground, and cool down in hot weather. Honey bees also spread water across the hive and fan it with their wings to provide natural air conditioning as it evaporates, and use it to dilute very thick or crystalized honey. Provide a safe place for bees to collect water with a bee bath!

**Materials:** Shallow dish (the saucer for a potted plant works well), small rocks or marbles, water

**Step 1:** Place the small rocks or marbles in the bottom of the dish. These give the bees a place to rest and climb out of the bee bath if they fall into the water.

**Step 2:** Fill the dish with water until only the tops of the rocks or marbles are exposed.

**Step 3:** Place the bee bath somewhere protected and out of direct sunlight for your local bees to visit. Change the water each day to keep your bee bath clean.

**Did You Know?** Most bees will not sting you unless provoked! Honeybees will defend themselves and their hives when threatened, and most native bees (if they sting at all) will only do so if physically trapped in your hand, for example. You're very unlikely to be stung while respectfully admiring the visitors to your bee bath!



## Butterfly Mineral Licks

Butterflies find many of the sugars they need by drinking nectar from plants, but they also need a reliable supply of water and minerals to stay healthy and improve the chances of their eggs hatching into caterpillars. They find these resources with a behavior called *mud-puddling*. Create your very own mud puddle for local butterflies to visit!

**Materials:** Shallow dish, soil, sea salt, water

**Step 1:** Fill the dish with soil to create place for butterflies to land.

**Step 2:** Mix a small amount of sea salt (1-2 tablespoons) into the soil.

**Step 3:** Distribute the soil-salt mixture throughout the dish to form high and low areas.

**Step 4:** Slowly fill the dish with water to form a mud mixture and shallow puddles that your local butterflies can visit.

**Step 5:** Place your mineral lick in a sunny place for butterflies to warm their bodies and renew their nutrients! Replenish the water as the dish begins to dry in a few days.



**Extra tip:** *Want to provide your local butterflies with an extra treat? Set slices of overripe fruits like bananas, apples, and oranges in your mineral lick dish. Butterflies are attracted to the fermenting fruit and will eat the sugars and vitamins they provide.*

