

Photo Description



This image shows a colorful flower garden with many different kinds of flowers blooming together. The flowers are pink, purple, white, orange, and magenta, with green leaves and stems all around them. These flowers grow close together in the same space and provide food and shelter for insects and other small animals.

Scientific Phenomena

Anchoring Phenomenon: A pollinator waystation—a garden designed to attract and support pollinators like bees, butterflies, and other insects.

Why This Happens: Plants need pollinators (insects) to move pollen between flowers so the plants can make seeds and reproduce. When many flowering plants grow together in one place, pollinators are attracted to the abundant food (nectar and pollen) and shelter. This creates a mutually beneficial relationship: pollinators get food, and plants get help reproducing. This is an example of how living things depend on each other in their habitat and how plants have adapted to attract the animals that help them survive.

Core Science Concepts

- Living Things Need Food:** These flowers provide nectar and pollen that insects eat. Plants and animals both need food to live and grow.
- Habitats Support Living Things:** A habitat is a place where plants and animals live and find everything they need. This flower garden is a habitat that provides food, water, and shelter for many insects and small animals.
- Relationships Between Plants and Animals:** Flowers and pollinators have a special relationship—pollinators get food from flowers, and flowers get help making seeds. This shows how living things depend on each other.
- Plant Structures Help Them Survive:** Colorful flowers attract pollinators. Flowers are a plant's external part that helps it reproduce and survive.

Pedagogical Tip:

First graders learn best through observation and hands-on experience. Before or after this lesson, take students outside to observe a real flower garden or pollinator waystation (even a small one). Have them watch for insects visiting flowers and describe what they see. This concrete experience will anchor abstract concepts about habitats and relationships in real-world observation.

UDL Suggestions:

Multiple Means of Representation: Display large, clear photos of individual flowers alongside the garden image so students can see both the "big picture" (ecosystem) and specific details (flower structures). Use real flowers or high-quality models students can touch and smell to engage multiple senses.

Multiple Means of Action & Expression: Allow students to show learning through drawing, acting out how a bee visits a flower, building a model garden with craft materials, or dictating observations to you rather than writing.

Multiple Means of Engagement: Connect to student interests by asking, "What insects have you seen in your yard or park?" to make the content personally relevant.

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Zoom In / Zoom Out

Zoom In - Microscopic Level:

Inside each flower is pollen (tiny yellow dust) and nectar (sweet liquid). When you zoom in so close you need a magnifying glass or microscope, you can see pollen grains and the tiny parts of the flower where nectar is made. Pollen is so small you can barely see it, but it's essential for making seeds.

Zoom Out - Ecosystem Level:

Zoom out to see this flower garden as part of a larger ecosystem. This garden is one habitat within a neighborhood, which connects to parks, forests, and farms. Pollinators travel between many flowers in many gardens, helping all of them reproduce. Pollinators also feed birds and other animals. The entire community of plants and animals depends on these connections. Without pollinators, many plants couldn't make seeds, and animals that eat those plants and seeds wouldn't survive.

Discussion Questions

1. "Why do you think the flowers in this garden are so many different colors?" (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)
 - Guides students to think about why bright colors matter for attracting insects.
2. "What do you think the insects get from visiting these flowers, and what do the flowers get from the insects visiting?" (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 3)
 - Encourages thinking about the mutual relationship and cause-and-effect.
3. "If there were no insects visiting these flowers, what do you think would happen to the plants next year?" (Bloom's: Evaluate | DOK: 3)
 - Promotes critical thinking about the importance of pollinators for plant survival.
4. "How is this flower garden different from a field with only one kind of flower?" (Bloom's: Compare | DOK: 2)
 - Helps students notice diversity and think about why variety matters.

Potential Student Misconceptions

- Misconception: "Flowers are just pretty decorations; they don't do anything important."

Clarification: Flowers are how plants make seeds and babies. They're also home and food for insects and animals. Flowers are working parts of plants that help plants survive and reproduce.

- Misconception: "Insects visit flowers to play or because they like the colors."

Clarification: Insects visit flowers because they need to eat the nectar and pollen for energy and food. The bright colors help insects find the flowers. It's not play—it's the insect searching for food to survive.

- Misconception: "Plants and insects are not connected to each other; they just happen to live in the same place."

Clarification: Plants and insects need each other. Plants give insects food (nectar and pollen), and insects help plants by spreading pollen so plants can make seeds. They have an important relationship.

Extension Activities

1. Create a Classroom Flower Garden (or Seed Planting):

Set up small pots with soil in the classroom or outside. Give each student seeds to plant (marigolds, zinnias, or sunflowers work well). Have students water and observe their plants over weeks. Discuss what the plants need to grow and what insects might visit their flowers. This connects to observing growth and understanding plant needs.

2. Insect Observation Hunt:

Take students outside to a garden, park, or grassy area. Give them clipboards and paper to draw or tally the insects they see visiting flowers (bees, butterflies, ants, beetles, etc.). Ask, "What are the insects doing at the flowers?" Create a simple class chart showing which insects visited which flowers. Discuss patterns in their observations.

3. Design Your Own Pollinator Waystation:

Using craft materials (construction paper, tissue paper, pipe cleaners, pom-poms), have students design and create a colorful model flower or garden. Ask them to think about what colors and shapes might attract pollinators. Display creations and discuss which designs they think insects would visit and why.

Cross-Curricular Ideas

- Mathematics: Create a simple graph showing how many flowers of each color are in the garden. Count petals on different flowers. Measure and compare flower heights using non-standard units (paper clips, blocks).
- English Language Arts: Read aloud picture books about flowers, bees, and butterflies (see resources below). Have students dictate or draw stories about what a bee or butterfly might see visiting flowers. Use repetitive language patterns: "The bee visits the pink flower. The bee visits the purple flower."
- Social Studies / Community: Discuss how people create gardens to help nature. Connect to caring for the environment and community spaces. If possible, visit a local community garden or invite a gardener to share how they help pollinators.
- Art: Paint or draw flowers using bright colors. Create a large class mural of a flower garden with flowers and insects. Use collage materials (tissue paper, magazines) to design a colorful flower or pollinator.

STEM Career Connection

1. Beekeeper: A person who cares for honeybees in special boxes called hives. Beekeepers make sure bees are healthy and help pollinate farms and gardens. Bees make honey! Average Annual Salary: \$50,000–\$70,000 USD
2. Botanist: A scientist who studies plants—how they grow, what they need, and how they help animals and people. Botanists work in gardens, farms, and laboratories. Average Annual Salary: \$65,000–\$85,000 USD
3. Environmental Scientist: A person who studies nature and how plants, animals, and people live together. They design gardens and spaces to help wildlife survive. They protect habitats. Average Annual Salary: \$70,000–\$95,000 USD

NGSS Connections

- 1-LS1-1: Use materials to design a solution to a human problem by mimicking how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs.
- Connection: Students can observe how flower colors and shapes are external parts that help plants attract pollinators, solving the plant's "problem" of needing help to reproduce.
- 1-LS1-2: Read texts and use media to determine patterns in behavior of parents and offspring that help offspring survive.
- Connection: This waystation demonstrates patterns in animal behavior—insects return repeatedly to flowers for food, and plants produce flowers season after season.
- 1-LS3-1: Make observations to construct an evidence-based account that young plants and animals are like, but not exactly like, their parents.
- Connection: Students can observe that seeds from these flowers will grow into similar plants, and young insects will behave like their parents by seeking flowers for food.

Disciplinary Core Ideas:

- 1-LS1.A All organisms have external parts. Different animals use their body parts in different ways to see, hear, grasp objects, protect themselves, move from place to place, and seek, find, and take in food and water.
- 1-LS1.B Plants need water and light to grow. Animals need food, water, and air. Plants get the materials they need for growth chiefly from air and water.
- 1-LS3.A Young animals are very much, but not exactly, like their parents. Plants also are very much, but not exactly, like their parents.

Crosscutting Concepts:

- Patterns Insects visit flowers repeatedly in patterns; flowers bloom seasonally in patterns.
- Cause and Effect Colorful flowers cause insects to visit; insects visiting flowers cause pollen to spread, which allows seeds to form.
- Structure and Function The structure of flowers (color, shape, nectar) serves the function of attracting pollinators.
- Systems and System Models The flower garden is a system where plants and pollinators interact; neither could complete their life cycle without the other.

Science Vocabulary

- * Pollinator: An animal, like a bee or butterfly, that carries pollen from one flower to another and helps plants make seeds.
- * Nectar: A sweet liquid inside flowers that insects drink for energy and food.
- * Pollen: Tiny yellow dust inside flowers that is needed to make seeds; insects carry it from flower to flower.
- * Habitat: A place where plants and animals live and find everything they need to survive, like food, water, and shelter.
- * Flower: The colorful part of a plant that makes seeds; flowers attract insects and other animals.
- * Waystation: A safe garden or space designed with plants and flowers to help insects and pollinators find food and rest.

External Resources

Children's Books:

- The Bee Tree by Patricia Polacco
 - A beautiful story about a grandfather and granddaughter following bees to find a wild beehive, celebrating the importance of bees.
- From Flower to Bee by Gail Gibbons
 - A clear, illustrated non-fiction picture book explaining how flowers, bees, and pollination work together.
- The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle
 - A classic story about a small seed's journey and how it grows into a flower, showing the plant life cycle with beautiful collage illustrations.