



PIXABAY.COM PHOTOS

At left, moths will sometimes visit the same flowers as diurnal pollinators but also seek out night-blooming plants that daytime fliers miss. At right, Nectar bats are very important pollinators in tropical and desert climates who rely on nectar as a protein source. They are not known to live exclusively in the United States; you're more likely to see the common Oregon bat dining on pests.

## ASK A MASTER GARDENER: POLLINATION

**Q**uestion: Is flower pollination a daylight activity or are there pollinators busy in my garden after dark?

**A**nswer: Pollination is an important around-the-clock activity shared by creatures in the light and the dark.

Pollinators visit flowers to consume their nectar and pollen. Pollen grains from a flower's anthers (male part of the plant) rubs onto a pollinator, who then transports the pollen to another flower, where the pollen sticks to the stigma (the female part), thus fertilizing the flower.

Pollinators include insects, birds and mammals, who vary in their pollen-gathering skills as well as when they

choose to be active.

Diurnal (day-active) insects include bumblebees, small solitary bees, bee flies and hoverflies. Honeybee colonies require pollen as protein to survive. They are excellent pollinators because their furry legs and bodies easily collect pollen.

Butterflies, active during the

day, are less efficient than bees in pollinating because they do not pick up as much pollen on their bodies and lack specialized structures for collecting it.

Birds are very important pollinators of wildflowers throughout the world; hummingbirds being key pollinators in the continental United States.

After dark, moths, bats, beetles and even some species of bees take over the night shift to feast on nectar. Moths will sometimes visit the same flowers as diurnal pollinators but also seek out night-blooming plants that daytime fliers miss. Although not all moths are nocturnal, many have adapted to the darkness in order to avoid predators and competition

with day-active critters. Night-blooming flowers attract pollinators with pale flowers, strong fragrance and plenty of nectar.



**Debby Finley**  
Master Gardener

■ Evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*), USDA Zones 4-9, is a species of flowering plant in the family Onagraceae with yellow flowers that open at sunset and close during the day.

■ Tuberoses (*Agave americana*), USDA Zones 4-9, is a night-blooming annual bulb with clusters of fragrant white flowers.

■ Night-blooming Jasmine (*Cestrum Nocturnum*), USDA Zones 8-11, is a fast-growing

woody shrub with fragrant green, white or yellow flowers.

My favorite is Angel's Trumpets (*Brugmansia*), USDA Zones 8-10, a genus of seven species of woody shrubs with pendulous flowers in the nightshade family of Solanaceae.

Nectar bats are very important pollinators in tropical and desert climates who rely on nectar as a protein source. Saguaro, agave, cocoa, bananas, mangoes and guavas all rely on pollination from bats.

Nectar bats have shorter ears, bigger eyes and longer muzzles and tongues than their insect-eating relatives. They also make flapping sounds and are much more direct in flight, whereas insect-eating bats are silent in the air, zigzagging back and forth in their pursuit of prey.

The tongues of

nectar-eating bats are also long and narrow, with brushy surfaces at the end. Nectar bats are not known to live exclusively in the United States, so the common Oregon bats are most probably dining on pests including mosquitos, beetles, and flies, making them beneficial for our gardens and yards.

*Do you have a gardening or insect question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu) or 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.*



Hummingbirds are key pollinators in the continental United States.