

Children's Garden Club

Growing with St. Louis County Parks & Recreation



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Pollinators Mud Balls

For the Garden by Haefner's
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"St. Louis County Parks Garden Club"

Welcome Back to "For the Garden" by Haefner's for our 17th Year of the Children's Garden Club! Next month – the Children's Garden Club is May 7th @ Jefferson Barracks Park – Ordinance Bldg.

We are keeping with our theme this year of understanding of the needs of the butterflies & other pollinators. Butterflies are just one kind of pollinator. Lots of other insects like the bumblebee and the hummingbird, and even the Hummingbird Moth (you probably didn't know there was such a thing) do the same work of pollinating, which is just moving pollen from flower to flower as they feed! That pollen helps grow the seeds, which grow into all the plants and trees and vegetables.

A few plants are pollinated by wind blowing pollen around but most flowering plants rely on creatures to carry the pollen from one flower to another, that's a lot of work for such little workers, the pollinators.

Pollinators contribute so much to almost everything that grows including; healthy food, shade from trees, even food for some of our pets. With this big circle of life and our environment it is so important that we should want them to feel at home in our landscape and community. {Every third bite of food we eat had a pollinator helper. Most of the time, our busiest pollen worker is the honey bee. Every year, bees and other pollinators make nearly \$30 billion of our crops possible.}

Today Greg and Alex, and the staff have a great project, Mud Seed Balls! Making a mud ball and putting a few seeds in them is sort of making a baby garden, rolling it up tight and putting it outside in a place to grow. All it will need is you, some space, and sun and rain and soon you will be the official "Pollinator Party Planner" in your neighborhood!



With all the ingredients the seeds need to get started, our Café Menu can keep growing. Now we are adding a Monarch Mud Pie or Pollinator Cake Pop!

Seed balls are not new. Since ancient times around the world people have found simple ways of helping seeds get started without a lot of tools. Mud balls worked especially well where starting seed in some natural areas was difficult. The dirt ball acts as a mini nursery bed, covering the seed with a blanket of soil, hugging it and keeping it warm, safe and close to the ground. That way, its little tiny roots can have a moist soft place to grow. The seed does not have to be alone on top of the soil where it can get too hot or dry or maybe be even washed away in rain {or eaten by a hungry animal or bird!}

Making a Seed Ball - Recipe

- 2 parts potting soil
- 5 parts pottery clay mix from your local art store
- 1-2 parts water
- 1-2 parts seeds of your choice
- Large tub to mix ingredients
- Large box to dry and store seed balls

Directions:

1. Mix the soil, clay and 1 part water thoroughly. There should be no lumps. Slowly add more water until the mixture is the consistency of the toy store molding clay that comes in a can.
2. Add seeds. Keep kneading the dough until the seeds are well mixed in. Add more water if necessary.
3. Take small bits of the clay mixture and roll into ball about one inch in diameter. The balls should hold together easily. If they're crumbly, add more water.
4. Dry seed balls for 24-48 hours in a shady place before sowing or storing. They store best in a cardboard box. Do not use plastic bags.
5. The last step in how to make flower seed balls is to sow them. Yes, you can place them carefully over the area to be planted or you can gently toss them one at a time, which is a lot of fun. Don't bury them and don't water them.

Thank you to Christy and Jennifer at Pure Air Native Seed and MaryAnn Fink, Butterfly Buddy/ Patron of Pollinators for our seed donations.