

Flower Show Fun

By Tina Will

A new project was introduced this year to encourage children and adults to plant more of what our pollinating insects need: flowers. 'Save the pollinators' has been the cry for several years now, and pollinators importance to our food crops and flowering landscape enjoyment can't be understated. Master Gardener Laurie Clarkston knows that children, too, love to garden. She suggested we host a flower show to give people of all ages the chance to show what they grow, and to encourage the insect population in the process.

According to the Pollinator workshop (<https://www.pollinator.org/pollinators>), Pollinators are responsible for bringing one out of every three bites of food we eat. They provide pollination to over 180,000 different plant species and more than 1200 crops. Pollinators support healthy ecosystems that clean the air, stabilize soils, and support other wildlife. But, the population of pollinators is in decline due to loss in feeding and nesting habitats, misuses of chemicals and changes in the climatic patterns.

The Flower Show was held in late August at the Fredericksburg Branch of the library. CRRL's graphics department provided a lovely poster, and Art McKinney gave outstanding help to promote this event.

The result was a success and likely to be repeated next year. June 19-25, 2023 is next year's Pollinator week, and may be used as a kick-off for the Flower Show with short talks on growing flowers that will be offered by Master Gardeners. The actual Flower Show, where flowers will be displayed and judged, is again planned for late August 2023 at the downtown library. This year there were about 150 flower entries. Next year we hope that many more children will bring what they themselves have grown. At our show, children's entries were judged separately from the adults. Ribbons were awarded, and it was wonderful fun to see what others enjoyed growing in their garden. Encourage your children to grow something they love and then enter it for fun, recognition, and a chance to share the beauty. Flower shows are amazing affairs with many different categories of flower characteristics. If you have visited the Homemakers Building at the Fredericksburg Fair, and saw the flower show there, then you have an idea of its complexity.

October and the Autumn season is a lovely time. We harvest and plan optimistically for next year, though we've probably added a side order of realism based on experience. How did your garden grow, and what can you do now while you enjoy Autumn's beauty? Fall is a great time to get a soil test. By doing it now you'll avoid the Spring rush, and have time to add what's recommended based on the results. Here's the link to Virginia Cooperative Extension's forms and fee information: <https://www.soiltest.vt.edu/fees-and-forms.html>. Soil test kits are available at VCE offices in Stafford and Spotsylvania, and at our libraries.

Changes are coming to VCE's Stafford office with the retirement of Guy Mussey. His 21 years of teaching and service to the community is well known to many. He taught us well, and he will be missed. We wish him an enjoyable retirement!