



Helping Pollinators through Seed Bombs

Purpose: To plant native wildflowers that, when grown, will attract pollinators.

Background Information: Pollination is the act of transferring pollen grains from the male anther of a flower to the female stigma. The goal of every living organism, including plants, is to create offspring for the next generation. One of the ways that plants can produce offspring is by making seeds. Seeds contain the genetic information to produce a new plant. Flowers are the tools that plants use to make their seeds. Almost all fruits and vegetables need pollinators in order to grow.

Insects and other animal pollinators obtain food in the form of energy-rich nectar and/or protein-rich pollen from the flowers they visit and in return, the flowers receive the services of pollinators carrying pollen from one flower to another. While food is often a sufficient lure for pollinators, flowering plants also attract pollinators using a combination of petal shapes, scents, and colors.

Materials:

- Pottery clay (red)
- Potting soil or compost
- Native wildflower seeds (free of neonicotinoids and synthetic pesticides)
- Water
- Mixing bucket or bowl
- Small paper bags

Set Up:

- Premix the dirt-clay mixture beforehand (instructions below); it should remain moist throughout the activity.

Instructions:

- In the large mixing bucket, mix 1-part pottery clay to every 2-part soil/compost. Mix the clay and soil until you get an even distribution.
- Add water to the mixture (experiment with $\frac{1}{4}$ part water). You should get a slightly damp mud ball. If it is caking to your hands, then it is too wet. If it gets too wet, let the matrix dry out in the sun until it is the right consistency or add more of the clay/soil ratio.
- Once you have the mixture right, you should pinch off small pieces of the matrix and roll it into a ball with about the diameter of a nickel.
- Once you have your ball the right size, take 1-2 seeds with high germination rate (>90%) and push them into the middle of your seed matrix.
- Reshape the matrix into the ball shape and then let harden and dry in the sun until hard.
- Throw the seed bomb into unkempt grassy or bare dirt areas where there is plenty of access to sun and where it does not look likely that it will be mowed over too often. You can also plant them at home in a pot or flower bed.
- Watch your flowers grow and enjoy your new pollinator friends!