POLLINATOR PICNIC

Background

Pollinator Picnic introduces students to the concept of pollination and to specific pollinators for five of the plants in Sabino Canyon. Students will explore the influence pollinators have on people, as well as the influence people have on pollinators.

The students are introduced to the concept of a pollinator by learning about the partnership between bees and many of the plants we eat. Students envision a picnic with food items that are the result of pollination by bees or wind. When bees are removed due to various potential environmental hazards, the picnic is seriously limited without the presence of bees.

The students are encouraged to answer why plants are important for our survival and the survival of other animals. We review how plants are more than just food for us. Plants create oxygen for us to breathe and provide materials for our shelter, medicines, and clothing; they enrich soil, and they enhance the beauty of our planet.

We ask the students to identify the basic structure of the plant (root, stem, leaf, and flower) and the function of each structure (absorb water, support the plant, make food for the plant, and attract pollinators, respectively). The parts of the flower (pistil and stamen) are identified, and their role in pollination is described. The plant can’t move itself, so it needs a pollinator for the production of fruit and seeds.

The color, odor, shape, and presence of nectar are illustrated for five plants from Sabino Canyon (saguaro, ocotillo, brittle bush, sacred datura, and a wildflower). Students use pollinator puppets from Sabino Canyon (bat, sphinx moth, hummingbird, bee, and butterfly) to identify to which of the plants they are most likely to be attracted, given their innate abilities. A student POP! Talk illustrates some of the hazards (natural and human-induced) that can take place to prevent pollination from occurring and conservation methods we can use to Protect Our Pollinators.