

# Chassell Gardens Newsletter

A Volunteer Project in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan

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## **Pesticides and Herbicides**

It doesn't seem like it, but Spring is on the way. I can tell because the days are longer, mountains of seed catalogs arrive in the mail every day and the pesticides are appearing on the shelves at the big-box stores. Sooner than you think, you will see your friends and neighbors tending the Chassell Gardens along Highway and you may be out tending your garden as well.

In the past few years, you may have read or heard on the news that pollinators, especially bees – both honey bees and native bees – are being threatened by loss of habitat and by overuse of pesticides. There have been dramatic decreases in the total number of pollinators, and this affects all of us. Seventy-five percent of our fruits and vegetables rely on pollination by bees, flies, wasps, butterflies and birds. The grocery shelves would be pretty bare without them.

As with many other big environmental issues, you may wonder what you can do. A big difference can be made by simply providing food for pollinators by planting a diversity of plants, trees and shrubs that flower between May and October. If you don't have the time or space for that, even a pot or two of flowers will feed the bees, as well as looking pretty, too. You can provide a safe place for pollinators to nest and raise their young by leaving a small area of undisturbed soil in your garden or yard. These can be located behind the garden or woodpiles. The majority of pollinators are ground-nesters and they can't establish their nests in areas of grass or mulch.

You can also help by reducing the amount of pesticides used in your garden or on the lawn. If using pesticides, select a type which will have lower impact on pollinators. Read and follow all directions. Clip off any blooms in the garden or mow the lawn to remove any blossoms so beneficial insects will not accidentally pick

up the poison. Pick a time to spray when there is little or no wind, so you can control where the pesticides are deposited. Application late in the day is best, because many of the pollinators will have returned to their nests.

What each gardener and homeowner does in their garden and yard affects all of us. Pest control is important, but an understanding of the long-term effects of the pesticides and herbicides we use is part of our responsibility as gardeners and as an example to our neighbors.



*Osmia digaria*, orchard mason bee

### **Mason Bees**

Represented by several species in the genus *Osmia*, mason bees are some of the hardest-working pollinators you'll find in your yard and garden. They live individually and do not form collective hives, but will often nest near others of their species in cracks and holes; gardeners can attract them with bundles of small tube-like structures.

### **People Notice Our Gardens!**

The Chassell gardens are attracting attention and positive response from local residents and visitors alike. Many of our volunteers report that, when they are weeding or mulching, people will stop to admire and talk about the trees and plants. Your work does not go unnoticed! Thanks to all of our volunteers who take part.

We are always looking for more people to tend one of the Chassell gardens. It doesn't take too many hours during the summer to make all the difference in making our town look lovely and well-cared-for. If you're interested in volunteering, please contact Phyllis Johnson at [phjohnso333@att.net](mailto:phjohnso333@att.net)