

Local landscaping company doing its part to help pollinators

By Paula Brown

An Orangeville based landscaping company is gardening for a purpose ? to benefit pollinators.

?Development as an industry is pushing them away,? said Shaun Booth. ?We can help change this by designing our gardens and landscapes to support humans and wildlife alike.?

Shaun Booth is the owner of In Our Nature, a landscaping company that opened in the spring of 2018. Using only native plants In Our Nature designs gardens to be low maintenance and act as habitats for pollinators in an effort to support the local ecosystems.

?The best plants for pollinators would be native plants and these are the plants that develop in our area over a long period of time,? explained Mr. Booth. ?They've developed these interactions with surrounding wildlife.?

Exotics plants from Europe or Asian, Mr. Booth said, don't really benefit the local ecosystems because the wildlife haven't evolved to interact with these plants yet.

?When a plant comes over from another country it has a tendency to become invasive and when they escape into our natural areas they can take over and compromise the ecosystem,? said Mr. Booth.

Declining numbers of pollinators such as bees have been increasingly recorded and published. Reasons associated with the losses that have been published, including extended winters ? late springs, pesticides, loss of habitat and in some cases invasive species ? insects and plants.

The Ontario Beekeeper's Association (OBA), who have represented Ontario beekeepers since 1881, reported in a media release from July 16 that 1 in 5, or 21 percent, of beekeepers lost more than 70 percent of colonies through the winter. This survey was internally conducted and responded to by 660 Ontario beekeepers. The OBA in a media release from May 2018 said that losses exceeding 50 percent of a colony can be catastrophic with hives needing to recover for the entire summer season.

?Pollinators are really the backbone of our ecosystems and even our cultural systems. They pollinate a significant portion of the food crops that we love, including coffee, apples, watermelons,? said Mr. Booth. ?Besides that they also pollinate about 80 percent of all plants on earth so without pollinators we would likely lose most of those plants and we essentially can't live without them.?

Despite the recorded struggle of pollinators Mr. Booth says that he is seeing an increased awareness from people.

?People are starting to realize that to help pollinators and other wildlife in your garden you don't have to compromise anything,? said Mr. Booth. ?It's a whole different way to look at gardening and I thinking people are starting to want that more and more. They want their gardens to have a purpose.?

With a background in ecological restoration Mr. Booth's tips for non-harmful garden practices incorporate avoiding pesticides, planting in clusters, utilizing unused lawn, and a focus on native plants.

?You also want at least three native plants blooming for each growing season so spring summer and fall. This means that pollinators will have food throughout the season,? said Mr. Booth.