

Top 10 Plants and Pollinators:

Most Common Species of the Ship Canal Nature Preserve Plant-Pollinator

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Purpose

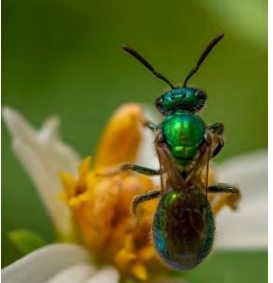




This resource is intended to help you identify the most common native species at Ship Canal when conducting pollinator observations, or just for fun when you are taking a walk along the lakefront! The information is organized into two tables, one for native plants and one for native pollinators. For both, I provide a common name and the scientific name of each (either down to genus or species level, followed by the family name) alongside pictures. For plants I include the approximate time of flowering and some details on the ecology or how to identify the species. For pollinators, I list the plants on this list that each pollinator was observed interacting with in 2021 alongside similar details on the ecology and for the use of identification. For pollinator identification, I recommend focusing on patterns and colors on the abdomen (the large segment below the wings). I include key details to look for when making quick identifications or reviewing any pictures that you may take.

While this resource serves as a helpful guide for learning about the plant-pollinator community at Ship Canal, it truly is only the start! I hope that the information here sparks interest in learning more about the plants and pollinators. With the information in the tables below, you can search the internet, botany books, or other resources to learn more about different species. If you are interested in learning more about a particular species or ecological topic, please reach out as I am happy to help connect you to other relevant resources. Thank you again for your participation in our study and for caring about the conservation of Pitcher's thistle and the restoration of Ship Canal Nature Preserve.

| Common and Scientific Names | Blooming Time and Description | Picture |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Showy Goldenrod</p> <p><i>Solidago speciosa</i> (Asteraceae)</p> | <p>Flowering: August to Early October</p> <p>Showy Goldenrod is a crucial resource for pollinators during the late summer and fall when many other plants have finished flowering. Compared to other goldenrods, Showy Goldenrod tends to grow in small clusters and the flowers on each stem are loosely clumped in the shape of a brush.</p> |  |
| <p>Pitcher's Thistle</p> <p><i>Cirsium pitcheri</i> (Asteraceae)</p> | <p>Flowering: Early June to Mid-July</p> <p>Pitcher's Thistle is the most important resource for pollinators at Ship Canal Nature Preserve. The creamy pink flowers and the seafoam green leaves are both lighter in color than the invasive plant spotted knapweed (<i>Centaurea stoebe</i>). Pitcher's Thistle is only found in dune habitats around the Great Lakes and is currently listed as Federally Threatened in the United States.</p> |  |
| <p>Tall Goldenrod</p> <p><i>Solidago altissima</i> (Asteraceae)</p> | <p>Flowering: August to Early October</p> <p>Tall Goldenrod is the most widespread goldenrod in the United States on this list. It can be aggressive and considered invasive in some habitats, but at Ship Canal Nature Preserve it is currently another important resource in the late summer and fall. The flowers tend to branch out from a single stem and can be positioned on any side of the offshoots from the stem.</p> |  |
| <p>Grass-Leaved Goldenrod</p> <p><i>Euthamia graminifolia</i> (Asteraceae)</p> | <p>Flowering: Late July to August</p> <p>Grass-Leaved Goldenrod is the most distinct goldenrod because it tends to have small clusters of flowers and thin leaves. This species tends to be a mid-season resource for smaller bee and fly pollinators.</p> |  |
| <p>Sand Coreopsis</p> <p><i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i> (Asteraceae)</p> | <p>Flowering: Late June to Early August</p> <p>Sand Coreopsis is currently a species of special concern in Wisconsin and provides resources mostly for bees. Patches of this plant are relatively rare at Ship Canal but keep an eye out for them as their expansion to other parts of the preserve is a good sign for the health of this population!</p> |  |

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| <p>Common Milkweed</p> <p><i>Asclepias syriaca</i> (Apocynaceae)</p> | <p>Flowering: Late June to August</p> <p>Common Milkweed is one of the most recognizable native plants for the broad, alternate leaves. There are large patches of this plant on the south and north ends of Ship Canal Nature Preserve. Keep an eye out for monarch butterflies visiting or even the caterpillars snacking on the leaves as they prepare to make cocoons. Additionally, bees and flies also frequent Common Milkweed, making it a resource for a diversity of pollinators.</p> |  |
| <p>Silverweed</p> <p><i>Argentina anserina</i> (Rosaceae)</p> | <p>Flowering: June to September</p> <p>Silverweed is a smaller plant in the rose family that grows horizontally on an aboveground root called a stolon. The underside of each leaf is silver in color. Silverweed is most important as a resource for small bees and flies in late spring and early summer.</p> |  |
| <p>American Searocket</p> <p><i>Cakile edentula</i> (Brassicaceae)</p> | <p>Flowering: July to September</p> <p>American Searocket is a plant in the Mustard family that only grows in dune habitats. The tiny white to pink flowers are visited by the smallest bees and flies in the network. American Searocket prefers to grow in open sand, so the thick, succulent leaves help the plant retain water.</p> |  |
| <p>Giant Goldenrod</p> <p><i>Solidago gigantea</i> (Asteraceae)</p> | <p>Flowering: August to Early October</p> <p>Despite the name, Giant Goldenrod is not necessarily huge in comparison to other goldenrods and is similar in size to Tall Goldenrod. The flowers tend to grow on the top side of offshoots from the main stem and curl outwards at the tips.</p> |  |
| <p>Wild Strawberry</p> <p><i>Fragaria spp.</i> (Rosaceae)</p> | <p>Flowering: April to May</p> <p>There are two species of Wild Strawberry in the area but the differences are so hard to distinguish that we collectively refer to them as <i>Fragaria spp.</i> (<i>spp.</i> means more than one species). The small white flowers are one of the first resources as spring begins.</p> |  |

| Common and Scientific Names | Flowers Visited in 2021 and Description | Picture |
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| <p>Common Eastern Bumble Bee</p> <p><i>Bombus impatiens</i> (Apidae)</p> | <p>Flowers Visited: Showy Goldenrod, Pitcher’s Thistle, Tall Goldenrod, Grass-Leaved Goldenrod, American Searocket, Giant Goldenrod</p> <p>This bumble bee quickly visits flowers (hence the name “impatiens”) as it searches for food. It has a single yellow stripe on its abdomen and the rest of the stripes are black.</p> |  |
| <p>Half-Black Bumble Bee</p> <p><i>Bombus vagans</i> (Apidae)</p> | <p>Flowers Visited: Showy Goldenrod, Pitcher’s Thistle, Tall Goldenrod, Grass-Leaved Goldenrod</p> <p>The Half-Black Bumble Bee has two large yellow stripes followed by three black stripes on its abdomen. It is much more thorough when visiting flowers compared to <i>Bombus impatiens</i>, as it prefers to stay at flowers for much longer.</p> |  |
| <p>Noctuid Moth</p> <p><i>Apamea inordinata</i> (Noctuidae)</p> | <p>Flowers Visited: Showy Goldenrod, Pitcher’s Thistle</p> <p>Despite some belief that moths are only active at night, the Noctuid Moth is a crucial pollinator for Showy Goldenrod throughout late summer and fall days. The moth’s coloration varies from light brown to grey.</p> |  |
| <p>Yellowjacket</p> <p><i>Vespula sp.</i> (Vespidae)</p> | <p>Flowers Visited: Showy Goldenrod, Pitcher’s Thistle, Tall Goldenrod, Grass-Leaved Goldenrod, Sand Coreopsis, American Searocket, Giant Goldenrod</p> <p>Yellowjackets certainly have a reputation of being aggressive, but they are actually important pollinators for a number of plants on this list! The zigzag black and yellow pattern on the abdomen is characteristic for Yellowjackets at Ship Canal.</p> |  |
| <p>Mining Bee</p> <p><i>Halictus spp.</i> (Halictidae)</p> | <p>Flowers Visited: Showy Goldenrod, Pitcher’s Thistle, Grass-Leaved Goldenrod, Sand Coreopsis, Silverweed, Giant Goldenrod, Wild Strawberry</p> <p>Mining Bees are small sweat bees that interact with a variety of plants throughout the entire growing season. They tend to have white hairs on their legs and mostly black abdomens with white or silver stripes along segments.</p> |  |

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| <p>Golden Sweat Bee</p> <p><i>Augochlorella striata</i> (Halictidae)</p> | <p>Flowers Visited: None from the Top 10</p> <p>The Golden Sweat Bee is a small sweat bee that has a beautiful metallic, blue-green color. While it was not observed visiting any of the top flowering plants from 2021, it frequently interacts with other plants at Ship Canal. This pollinator is one we will closely monitor to see how their interactions change with the restoration activities.</p> |  |
| <p>Leafcutter Bee</p> <p><i>Megachile spp.</i> (Megachilidae)</p> | <p>Flowers Visited: Showy Goldenrod, Pitcher’s Thistle, Tall Goldenrod, Grass-Leaved Goldenrod, Sand Coreopsis, Common Milkweed</p> <p>Leafcutter Bees have stronger jaws than other bees and tend to use leaves as nesting material. They notably carry pollen underneath their abdomen, resulting in an orange patch.</p> |  |
| <p>Long Dash Skipper Butterfly</p> <p><i>Polites mystic</i> (Hesperiidae)</p> | <p>Flowers Visited: Pitcher’s Thistle, Common Milkweed</p> <p>The Long Dash Skipper is a small butterfly that tends to visit the pink flowers at Ship Canal. The colors on their wings are from “scales.” These scales are patches of brown, orange, and grey to make up the beautiful coloration of this species.</p> |  |
| <p>Hover Fly</p> <p><i>Sphaerophoria spp.</i> (Syrphidae)</p> | <p>Flowers Visited: Pitcher’s Thistle, Tall Goldenrod, Common Milkweed, Silverweed, Wild Strawberry</p> <p>The Hover Fly is another pollinator that can be found throughout most the growing season and interacts with small and large flowers. Noticeable features include the red eyes, iridescent wings, and the yellow abdomen with black patches.</p> |  |
| <p>Brown-Winged Striped Sweat Bee</p> <p><i>Agapostemon splendens</i> (Halictidae)</p> | <p>Flowers Visited: Showy Goldenrod, Pitcher’s Thistle, Tall Goldenrod, Grass-Leaved Goldenrod, Giant Goldenrod</p> <p>This sweat bee is at least twice the size of the Golden Sweat Bee. The females are completely blue-green while the males have an abdomen with yellow and black stripes.</p> |  |