



## Mess and Soil Pollinators?

We don't usually think of beetles as elegant pollinators, but pollinate they do, especially in tropical environments. There are almost four times as many species of beetles on earth as animals with backbones. Various scarabs, garden chafers, soldier beetles, flower beetles, longhorns, and leaf beetles visit flowers and pollinate them.

To visualize a feast for beetles, think of stately southern magnolia blossoms. As is typical of beetle flowers, magnolia blossoms have lots of succulent parts, exude a sweet perfume, and reward pollinating beetles with tasty nutritious pollen. Some beetle blossoms produce scents reminiscent of overripe fruits and others produce specialized structures meant to be eaten.

Beetles often blunder their way through delicate blossoms searching for food, a mate, or perhaps the lavatory. What a contrast to the gentle butterfly!

No wonder they are called "mess and soil" pollinators!

