



Two-winged Pollinators

With careful observation you will pick up subtle differences in flying behavior among the insects buzzing around your garden. You may even suspect that some of them are flies masquerading as bees. In fact, they are. Flies are important pollinators for many plants. Flower flies, bee flies, midges, and mosquitoes are among the pollinators found in Diptera, the order of two-winged insects.

Flies seem to live in an alternate sensory world. Smells, shapes, colors, and substances that attract flies are often repellent to humans.

For many flies, there is nothing quite so beguiling as a pile of fresh dung or a dead animal. To take advantage of this, some flowers have evolved clever tricks to get a fly's attention. Dutchman's pipe (*Aristolochia* spp.), pawpaw, and even some viburnums are among plants with foul-smelling flowers. Other flowers present meat-like colors or tantalizing fake fur to lure flies into their service.

Not all flies have disgusting tastes. Flower flies and bee flies compete with bees for sweet-smelling flowers. And some dipterans are "chocoholics," like many of us. If that includes you, pause and give thanks to the tiny midges that are the pollinators of cacao (*Theobroma cacao*).



Fly Garden