

BURLEIGH DODDS SERIES IN AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE

# Promoting pollination and pollinators in farming

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# Contents

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Series list	x
Introduction	xix
Acknowledgement	xxiii

## **Part 1 Understanding pollinators and pollination**

1	What is pollination and what are pollinators in agriculture? <i>Seanne Clemente and Lynn Adler, University of Massachusetts, USA</i>	3
	1 Introduction	3
	2 The basics of pollination	4
	3 Pollinators and their diversity	8
	4 The ecology and evolution of floral traits	10
	5 Domestication and its impact on plant-pollinator relationships	16
	6 How do pollinators impact agriculture?	19
	7 Modern agriculture and pollinators	21
	8 Conclusion	24
	9 Where to look for further information	25
	10 References	25
2	The role and application of olfaction in crop plant-pollinator interactions <i>Sarah E. J. Arnold, Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, UK and Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology, Tanzania; Alison S. Scott-Brown, University of Cambridge and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK; and Philip C. Stevenson, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, UK</i>	47
	1 Introduction	47
	2 Key challenges	54
	3 Case studies	57
	4 Summary	63
	5 Future trends	63

6	Conclusion	64
7	Where to look for further information	65
8	References	65
3	The role of wind pollination in crop plants <i>Stephen Murphy, University of Waterloo, Canada</i>	73
1	Introduction	73
2	Fundamental mechanisms of wind pollination	73
3	Wind pollination and transgenic risks in grass crop species	74
4	Promoting wind pollination in open-pollinated crop species	78
5	Conclusion and future trends	79
6	References	80
<b>Part 2 Threats to pollinators</b>		
4	Assessing climate change impacts on pollinators <i>Kit Prendergast, Curtin University, Australia</i>	85
1	Introduction	85
2	Challenges anthropogenic climate change poses to pollinators	86
3	Advancing our understanding of climate change impacts on pollinators	98
4	Conserving pollinators under climate change	101
5	Conclusion	103
6	Where to look for further information	104
7	References	104
5	Assessing the impact of disease on pollinators <i>Patrycja Pluta and Robert J. Paxton, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany</i>	113
1	Introduction	113
2	A bestiary of honey bee diseases	114
3	The poorly known wild bee diseases	127
4	Disease transmission, spillover and spillback	135
5	Defence mechanisms of bees	138
6	Synergies with other risk factors	140
7	Prevention of diseases	141
8	Future trends	146
9	Where to look for further information	147
10	References	147
6	How neonicotinoid insecticides affect bees and other pollinators <i>D. Susan Willis Chan, University of Guelph, Canada</i>	165
1	Introduction	165
2	What are neonicotinoids?	166
3	Why are neonicotinoids such a concern for pollinators?	167

4	Environmental contamination and pollinator exposure	168
5	Toxicity and effects across pollinator taxa and contexts	170
6	Sublethal effects on bees and interactions among multiple stressors	171
7	Case studies illustrating consequences for pollinator populations and pollination	173
8	Conclusion	175
9	Where to look for further information	175
10	Acknowledgements	176
11	References	176
7	Assessing the impact of pesticides on pollinators <i>Christian Maus, Bayer AG, Germany; Anne Alix, Corteva Agriscience, UK; and Daniel R. Schmehl, Bayer CropScience LP, USA</i>	183
1	Introduction	183
2	History of bee testing and risk assessment	185
3	Testing pesticide effects to pollinators	186
4	Ecotoxicological risk assessment for pollinators	196
5	Indirect and sublethal effects	206
6	Risk mitigation	207
7	Pesticide incident monitoring	209
8	Conclusion	210
9	Where to look for further information	211
10	Acknowledgements	212
11	References	212
8	Assessing the impact of alien bees on native ones <i>M. Zakardjian, H. Jourdan, V. Le Féon and B. Geslin, Aix-Marseille University, Avignon University, CNRS, IRD, IMBE, Marseille, France</i>	225
1	Introduction	225
2	Assessment of key issues related to the introduction of alien bees	228
3	Case study: <i>Megachile sculpturalis</i>	234
4	Conclusion	240
5	Future trends in research	242
6	How to improve biosecurity	243
7	Where to look for further information	245
8	References	247

**Part 3 Promoting pollinators and pollination**

9	The role of habitat conservation and restoration in protecting pollinators in agricultural landscapes <i>Stephen Buchmann, University of Arizona, USA</i>	259
1	Introduction	259
2	Bees as pollinators	260

3	Challenges in habitat restoration	262
4	Assessing the effectiveness of habitat restoration	265
5	Case studies	268
6	Conclusion	271
7	Where to look for further information	272
8	References	272
10	Altering crop management practices to promote pollinators <i>Jose G. Franco, USDA ARS, USA; and Rachel E. Mallinger, University of Florida, USA</i>	283
1	Introduction	283
2	Approaches to managing production space for pollinators	284
3	Case studies	290
4	Assessing efficacy of alternative agronomic practices	294
5	Conclusion	295
6	Future trends in research	296
7	Where to look for further information	297
8	References	298
11	Ecological network approaches for promoting pollinators in agriculture <i>Darren M. Evans and Fredric M. Windsor, Newcastle University, UK</i>	305
1	Introduction	305
2	Plant-pollinator networks	306
3	Networks across scales	317
4	Increasing the completeness of pollination networks	324
5	Embedding pollination within wider agro-ecosystem networks	325
6	Next steps for pollination networks	328
7	Conclusion	331
8	Where to look for further information	332
9	Acknowledgements	332
10	References	332
12	Best management practices for pollinator protection in US apple production <i>Julianna K. Wilson, Michigan State University, USA; David Biddinger, Penn State University, USA; David Epstein, Northwest Horticultural Council, USA; Anne Nielsen, Rutgers University, USA; Ngoc Phan, University of Arkansas, USA; Jim Walgenbach, North Carolina State University, USA; and Neelendra K. Joshi, University of Arkansas, USA</i>	341
1	Introduction	341
2	Apple orchard pollinators	343
3	Pests, diseases and their management in apple production	344

---

4	Potential hazards to pollinators from apple pest management practices	346
5	Best management practices to promote pollinators	347
6	Best management practices: integrated pest and pollinator management	349
7	Best management practices for pesticide application	350
8	Acknowledgements	354
9	References	354
13	Entomovectoring: using pollinators to spread biocontrol agents <i>Jari Temmermans, Ghent University and Antwerp University, Belgium; Marie Legein and Sarah Leeber, Antwerp University, Belgium; and Guy Smagghe, Ghent University, Belgium</i>	359
1	Introduction	361
2	Factors important for successful entomovectoring	362
3	Examples of bumblebees as vectors for entomovectoring: successes and failures	369
4	Case study: entomovectoring of bacteria by <i>Bombus terrestris</i> against <i>Botrytis cinerea</i> in strawberry	372
5	Conclusion and future trends	379
6	Where to look for further information	381
7	References	381
	Index	385

# Introduction

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It has been reported that up to 95% of all flowering plants require the services of other organisms to move pollen from male to female flower parts during the pollination process. These organisms, including bees, are collectively known as pollinators. However, in light of the growing evidence of global declines in pollinator species, the management, ecology and conservation of wild and managed pollinators is a subject of growing importance and research activity.

This volume reviews the wealth of research on our current understanding of existing pollination processes and their importance to our global ecosystems. The book considers how pollinators interact with plants, as well as the major threats to pollinator species, including climate change, diseases and pesticide exposure. The book is split into three parts: Part 1 chapters focus on understanding pollinators and pollination, focusing specifically on their role in agriculture, the role and application of olfaction and the use of wind pollination in crop plants. Chapters in Part 2 examine the various threats to pollinators, such as the impact of climate change, disease, the use of neonicotinoid insecticides and pesticides as well as the impact of alien bees on native ones. Part 3 chapters review promoting pollinators and pollination, focusing specifically on the role of habitat conservation and restoration, the alteration of crop management practices and the use of ecological network approaches. Chapters also highlight best management practices for pollinator protection, focusing specifically on US apple production and the use of entomovectoring technology.

## **Part 1 Understanding pollinators and pollination**

The first chapter of this volume provides an overview of what pollination is and the role of pollinators in agriculture. Chapter 1 begins by discussing the basics of pollination and goes on to discuss pollinators and their diversity. The chapter moves on to review the ecology and evolution of floral traits, focusing specifically on the origins of flowering plants and their relationship with pollinators, floral traits and the ecology of pollination as well as the co-evolution of plants and pollinators. A section on domestication and its impact on plant-pollinator relationships is also provided, which is then followed by an analysis of how pollinators impact agriculture and how pollinators are present in modern agriculture practices.

The next chapter examines the role and application of olfaction in crop plant-pollinator interactions. Chapter 2 introduces the background and theory underpinning the use of odours by insects in pollinators. It discusses

how flowers produce odours and highlights issues specific to crops such as selective breeding. It then explores current technologies and case studies in which natural or synthetic odours on or near the crop, and the interaction with insects, influences visitation, pollination success and yield.

Chapter 3 reviews the role of wind pollination in crop plants. This chapter reflects on the early transition from wind-pollinated species (especially Poaceae) into crop species and the current state of wind-pollination in agricultural pollination networks. It then provides a short review of the evolution and biomechanics of wind pollination to establish why humans moved away from open pollination. A more deep exploration of the relative importance (or lack thereof) in crops such *Zea*, *Triticum*, *Oryza*, and *Secale* follows, as does a focus on the extant risk of heterospecific pollen transfer to wind-pollinated weeds. The chapter also discusses the role of anthropogenic climate change on wind-pollinated crops and the future and relative importance of wind-pollination in widespread and niche crops. The chapter ends with a case study of how one might create a 'win-win' in terms of conservation and restoration of natural habitats to promote wind-pollination in farming.

## **Part 2 Threats to pollinators**

Part 2 opens with a chapter that focuses on assessing the impacts of climate change on pollinators. Chapter 4 first presents an overview of observed and predicted impacts of climate change on pollinators, focusing on elements such as rising temperatures, loss of habitat, temporal and spatial mismatches between plants and pollinators and extreme events. The chapter also highlights the effect climate change has on pollinator cues, factors that may mediate species' responses, including synergisms with other threatening processes. A section emphasising the importance of understanding climate change impacts on pollinators is also provided, which is then followed by a section presenting a number of ways in which we can help pollinators face the challenge of climate change.

Chapter 5 looks at the impact of diseases on pollinators. The chapter first provides an analysis of various honey bee diseases, focusing specifically on ectoparasitic mites, viruses, fungi, bacteria, trypanosomes and common pests such as the small hive beetle and wax moths. It also discusses how disease impact on honey bee colonies and pollination can be measured. A section on the poorly known wild bee diseases is also provided, discussing the major known pests and pathogens of both bumble bees and other solitary bee species. The chapter reviews disease transmission, spillover and spillback in all three pollinator taxa as well as some of the current methods and approaches for controlling pests and pathogens.

The next chapter focuses on how neonicotinoid insecticides affect bees and other pollinators. Chapter 6 discusses the wide range of research on how neonicotinoids affect both managed and wild bee populations in particular. It reviews levels of environmental contamination and how this affects topical and oral exposure routes. The chapter also addresses sublethal effects and briefly discusses the interaction of different stressors. It includes a number of case studies showing the negative effects of neonicotinoids on a range of bee species.

Moving on from Chapter 6, Chapter 7 examines the impact of pesticides on pollinators. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the origins of bee testing and risk assessment, then moves on to discuss the testing of pesticide effects in pollinators, drawing attention to species testing, testing methodologies and designs and guidelines and risk assessment guidance documents. The chapter also examines test method development and validation and highlights the principles of Good Laboratory Practice. A section on the ecotoxicological risk assessment for pollinators is included, which is then followed by an analysis of both the indirect and sublethal effects of pesticides. Risk mitigation and pesticide incident monitoring are also discussed.

The final chapter of Part 2 reviews the impact of alien bees on native ones. Chapter 8 explores the main impacts of alien bees on native bees through competition for food or nesting resources, interference, pathogen spillover and genetic contamination. Implications for native bee conservation are also discussed. In addition, in this chapter, a particular focus on the first alien bee that colonised Europe, *Megachile sculpturalis* is also emphasised. The chapter also highlights the main knowledge gaps and important trends for future research. Finally, avenues for managing alien bee species and preventing their introduction are provided.

### **Part 3 Promoting pollinators and pollination**

Chapter 9 focuses on challenges and options in habitat restoration for solitary bees which account for 90% of bee species. As well as being important parts of local ecosystems, these species are pollinators of a wide range of crops such as alfalfa, tomato, eggplant and blueberries, cucurbit crops (such as pumpkin, squash and watermelon) as well as orchard crops such as almonds and cherries. The chapter looks at challenges facing habitat restoration and research on the effectiveness of existing restoration projects. The chapter also includes case studies on commercial management of Alkali bees, promoting stem or cavity-nesting bees and providing underground nesting boxes for bumblebees.

The next chapter of Part 2 draws attention to the alteration of crop management practices to promote pollinators. Chapter 10 begins by introducing the current approaches that are currently used when it comes

to managing production space for pollinators within the context of various cropping systems, such as row crops, specialty crops, perennial orchards and perennial forage and pasture systems. The chapter then goes on to provide several case studies demonstrating these approaches, drawing specific attention to annual row and specialty crop systems as well as perennial orchard and forage systems. Assessing the efficacy of alternative agronomic practices is also discussed.

The subject of Chapter 11 is the use of ecological network approaches for promoting pollinators in agriculture. The chapter begins by describing the important and agriculturally relevant characteristics and structures in plant-pollinator networks. It then moves on to examine the use of ecological networks at the field, farm, landscape and national scale. The chapter also highlights the importance of filling in major gaps in pollinator networks. A section on embedding pollination within wider agroecosystem networks is also provided, which is followed by an analysis of the potential next steps for pollination network research.

Chapter 12 describes a set of pollinator best management practices (BMPs) for US apple production. It first provides an overview of apple orchard pollinators, drawing specific attention to ground nesting bees, mason bees, small carpenter bees and wild bumble bee queens. The chapter moves on to provide an overview of the various pests and diseases that can affect apple production. This is then followed by a section that highlights the potential hazards to pollinators from apple pest management practices. The chapter also examines best management practices to promote pollinators as well as the use of integrated pest and pollinator management and pesticide application to manage apple pests and diseases.

The final chapter of the book focuses on using pollinators to spread biocontrol agents via the use of entomovectoring technology. Chapter 13 first highlights the factors that are important for successful entomovectoring, such as the type of vector, the dispenser, the biocontrol agent product and biosafety. The chapter moves on to provide successful and failed attempts at using bumble bees as vectors for entomovectoring. This section is then followed by a case study that focuses on entomovectoring (also known as apivectoring) of microbial biological control agents by *Bombus* spp., especially *B. terrestris*, against grey mould *Botrytis cinerea* and other pests in strawberry production, drawing specific attention to the importance of tackling and controlling *Botrytis cinerea* infection in strawberries.

# Acknowledgement

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## **Cover image copyright**

- Cover image: A male hoary squash bee on staminate pumpkin flower. 2011. © Sheila Macleod Potter.

# Chapter 1

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## What is pollination and what are pollinators in agriculture?

*Seanne Clemente and Lynn Adler, University of Massachusetts, USA*

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The basics of pollination
- 3 Pollinators and their diversity
- 4 The ecology and evolution of floral traits
- 5 Domestication and its impact on plant-pollinator relationships
- 6 How do pollinators impact agriculture?
- 7 Modern agriculture and pollinators
- 8 Conclusion
- 9 Where to look for further information
- 10 References

### 1 Introduction

The Altamira cave system in northern Spain is renowned for the contemporary depictions of Paleolithic life that adorn its walls in vivid blacks, reds, and ochres. But tucked away from the main chamber's iconic herds of bison is an inconspicuous painting in an unassuming side chamber. It depicts a gangly human figure climbing a winding structure - most likely, a ladder. At the upper end of the ladder are four thick, overlapping arches nested within each other, surrounded by thin winged figures - the nest of a wild honey bee colony, and the bees themselves. This painting at Altamira, dated 13500 years old, is a prehistoric account of beekeeping - the oldest one known to this day (Crane, 1999). Similar paintings depicting ladders, bees' nests, and bees are found in prehistoric art across the world: primarily in South Africa, but also in Australia, India, France, and Spain (Crane, 1986). They are a testament that even in the earliest chapters of human history, humankind has relied on the activities of pollinators.

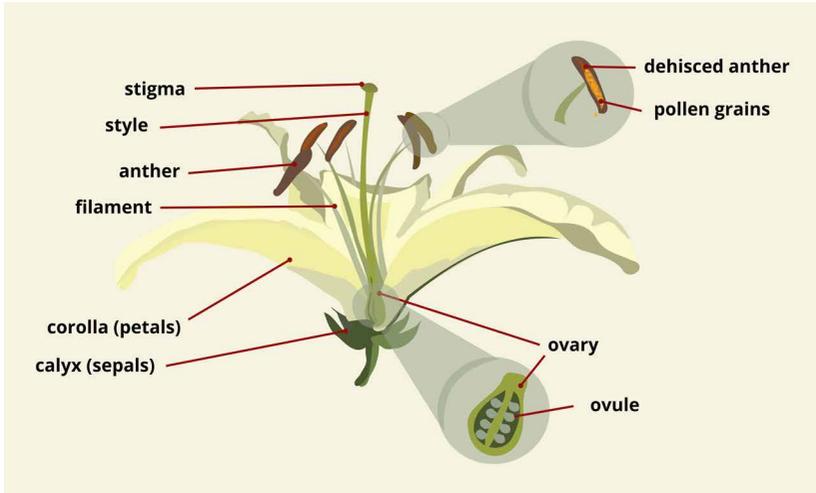
Honey bees, their flower-visiting habits, and their industrious honey-making skills have undoubtedly been appreciated by the humans of the ancient world, appearing in Aristotle's *History of Animals*, Virgil's *Georgics*,

and the Old Testament. The Romans and Greeks were well aware of the importance of pollination in the production of date palms (*Ficus carica*); the polymath Theophrastus (c 371–287 BC) described the plant's 'male and female' flowers and the necessity of a 'union' between two flower types for the trees to bear fruit. But it was only much later, in the late seventeenth century, that Rudolf Jakob Camerarius (1665–1721) observed that male anthers and female stigmas were prerequisites to plant reproduction. His work was built upon by the investigations of several botanists, including Bradley (1731), Miller (1724), and Vaillant (1718); by the early eighteenth century, it was widely accepted that pollen, known as the *Farina Fecundens*, was the mode of sexual transmission of plants.

The work of Kölreuter (1733–1806) was fundamental in establishing the importance of insect vectors in the transport of pollen, the structure and mechanism of pollen, and the role of nectar in attracting pollinators. Sprengel (1750–1816) further examined the structure and function of flower parts, describing in detail a diversity of floral adaptations involved in attracting pollinators. Darwin's (1809–1882) publication of *The Origin of Species* and his studies on pollination mechanisms (notably his work with orchids) were followed by a surge of interest in pollination; this included Hermann Müller's (1829–1883) and Federico Delpino's (1868–1875) investigations into a myriad of plant-pollinator systems and Knuth's seminal Handbook of Flower Pollination series (Knuth 1906–1909). With the twentieth century came the advent of genetics, the discovery of DNA, and an explosion of interest in plant ecology. Such discoveries shifted the study of pollination toward understanding the molecular mechanisms, evolutionary history, and interspecies relationships that govern pollination. There are countless contributors to this recent era of pollination studies, in addition to others that were crucial in the discovery of pollination and its basic mechanisms. Their work is beyond the scope of this brief introduction; for further reading, Proctor (1996a) provides a comprehensive summary.

## 2 The basics of pollination

Pollination is a key first step in plant reproduction. But to understand pollination, one must first be familiar with how pollen is produced. Pertinent floral structures are shown in Fig. 1. The *corolla*, which is the shape and structure formed by a flower's petals, serves chiefly to attract pollinators. The *calyx* (or sepals) protects the flower in the bud and serves as a structural support for the corolla. The *androecium* (or *stamens*) are the male reproductive structures of flowers consisting of *anthers* that each rest atop a structural *filament*. The *gynoecium* is the collective female reproductive structure comprised of individual *stigmas* resting upon a *style* that connects to the *ovary*, where the flower's *ovules* reside.



**Figure 1** Cross-section of a mature flower and its components.

The anthers are the site of pollen production. At maturity, the inner cells of the anther undergo meiosis to produce individual pollen grains. The outer layers of the anthers then split open, or *dehisce*, to release pollen. Appearing as a powdery, fine substance to the naked eye, pollen is made up of microscopic grains, each surrounded by an outer wall, or *exine*, that gives the grains their distinct shape and rigidity. The aid of a microscope will reveal that the pollen exines are covered in pores. An inner wall of cellulose and pectin, known as an *intine*, further protects the interior of the grain, which contains the gametes in the form of a *generative nucleus* and a supplemental *vegetative nucleus*.

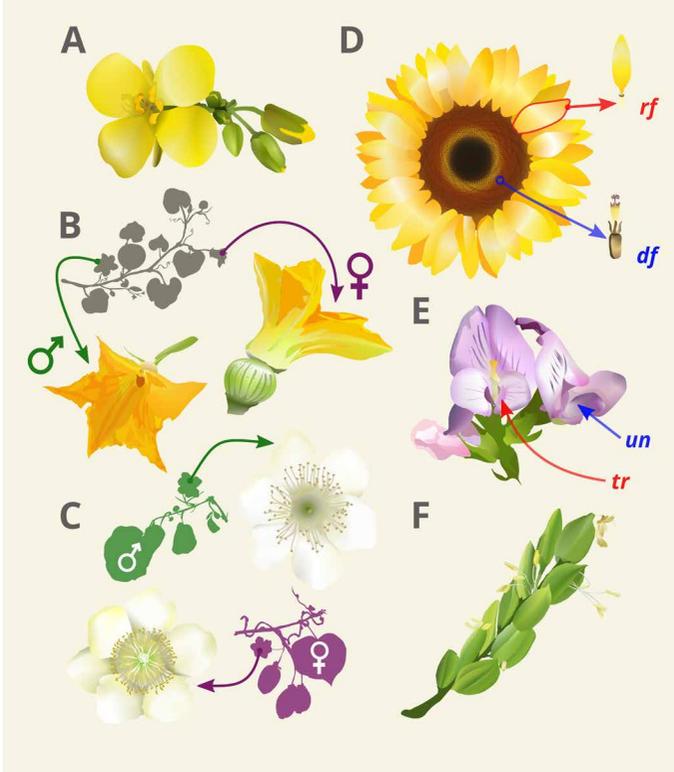
Pollination is simply the transfer of pollen from the anthers of the androecium to the stigmas of the gynoecium. Following pollination is *fertilization*, which begins as the pollen grain attaches to the stigma, imbibes water, and *germinates* to form a pollen tube that penetrates the stigma's tissue and carves a path through the *style* to ovules in the *ovary*. The grain's vegetative nucleus moves through the newly formed tube, mediating the movement of the generative nucleus (Zhou and Meier, 2014), which has now divided into two separate male *gametes*. Upon arrival at the ovule, the vegetative nucleus dissolves, and one of the male gametes fuses with the egg to form a diploid embryo. The second male gamete fuses with a *diploid fusion nucleus* in the ovary, forming the endosperm that provides nutrients for the newly formed seed.

In angiosperms (flowering plants), most species bear hermaphrodite *perfect* flowers, containing both pollen-producing and ovule-bearing structures. An obvious consequence of this hermaphroditism is *autogamy*, the self-fertilization of a flower by its own pollen. Plants may also self-fertilize through

*geitonogamy*, the fertilization of a flower by the pollen of another flower on the same plant. About 20% of angiosperms reproduce predominantly by self-fertilization (Barrett, 2003), and many plants reproduce through self-fertilization to some degree (Barrett, 2003; Goodwillie et al., 2005; Charlesworth, 2006; but see Lande and Schemske, 1985; Igić and Kohn, 2006). Self-fertilization grants the advantage of guaranteed reproduction, especially in environments where mates or pollinators are scarce (Kalisz et al., 2004; Aizen and Harder, 2007; reviewed in Busch and Delph, 2012).

The alternative reproductive strategy is *outcrossing*, fertilization with non-self-pollen. Darwin (1877) wrote that '[Nature] abhors perpetual self-fertilization'. Although inbreeding depression – the reduced survival and fertility of inbred offspring – is surprisingly uncommon in predominantly selfing plants (Husband and Schemske, 1996), self-fertilization is disadvantageous to outcrossing when considering gene flow, genetic variability, and diversification of plant lineages (Goldberg et al., 2010). Outcrossing plants employ mechanisms to minimize self-fertilization (Barrett, 2003). A common anti-selfing mechanism in plants is the spatial (*herkogamy*) and temporal (*dichogamy*) separation of pollen and stigma. In *herkogamy*, the anthers and stigma are physically separate, such that pollen cannot be passively transferred to the stigma. In *dichogamy*, the anthers mature asynchronously with the receptive period of the stigmas. Rather than relying on spatio-temporal separation, some plants separate anthers and stigmas into unisexual *imperfect flowers*, which can be a more effective mechanism to avoid self-fertilization. *Monoecious* plants bear both male and female imperfect flowers on the same plant (Fig. 2b); the plants are still hermaphroditic and may self-fertilize. *Monoecious* crops include corn, oil palms, and members of the Cucurbitaceae family (e.g. melons, pumpkins, cucumbers, and zucchini). *Dioecious* plants only bear flowers of one sex and must rely on a plant with opposite-sexed flowers to reproduce (Fig. 2c) – in this way, dioecy is the only mechanism that fully prevents self-fertilization. *Dioecious* crops are uncommon; some examples are asparagus, kiwi fruit, and hops. Finally, plants may prevent self-fertilization through *self-incompatibility*, a variety of biochemical barriers to the fertilization process. The mechanisms governing self-incompatibility vary widely across taxa; Glover (2014) provides a review. One mechanism of self-incompatibility is evident to many humans across the globe: the allergic response to pollen, commonly known as hay fever, is caused by self-incompatibility proteins that coat the pollen grain surfaces of some plant species (Proctor, 1996b).

*Pollination vectors* transport pollen from anthers to stigmas. Pollen transfer can be achieved abiotically, through wind (anemophily) or water (hydrophily). The vast majority of abiotically pollinated plants are anemophilous (Ackerman, 2000), with nearly all gymnosperms (Faegri and van der Pijl, 1979) and 10% of all flowering plants transporting their pollen through the wind (Friedman



**Figure 2** Floral traits and reproductive systems vary widely across plant taxa, including crop plants. (A) *Brassica napus*. The oilseed rape has bright, four-petaled flowers with four prominent anthers and two shorter anthers. Most other *Brassica* crops (e.g. kale, turnips, and bok choy) display similar four-petaled, yellow flowers. (B) *Cucurbita pepo*. Cucurbit crops, such as squash, pumpkin, melons, and cucumber, are monoecious. Individual plants produce both pollen-producing male flowers and stigma-bearing female flowers. On female flowers, the stigma and style connect to the developing fruit at the flower's base. (C) *Actinidia deliciosa*. Kiwifruit vines are dioecious, with male and female flowers occurring on separate plants. The male flowers bear numerous showy anthers. Prominently displayed in the centers of female flowers are fertile stigmas surrounded by a crown of sterile 'false anthers'. (D) The floral head, or *capitulum*, of a sunflower, *Helianthus annuus*, is made up of many small ray florets (*rf*), with yellow petals surrounding a head of disk florets (*df*). Composite flower heads are characteristic in Asteraceae plants. (E) *Medicago sativa*. The complex flowers of alfalfa are wholly reliant on pollinators. The flowers' stigmas and anthers are sprung up inside two 'keel petals.' When a bee lands on the keel petal, it 'trips' the flower and the reproductive structures are explosively unfurled, releasing pollen. In the untripped flower (*un*), the intact keel petals enclose the reproductive structures. The exposed stigma and a remaining keel petal are visible on the tripped flower (*tr*). (F) *Oryza sativa*. Most major cereal crops, like rice shown here, are either self- or wind-pollinated. Characteristic of Poaceae plants: the inflorescence of rice bears dull, inconspicuous florets with many anthers.

# Index

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- Acarapis woodi* 118–119
- Acute bee paralysis virus (ABPV) 120–121
- Adaptive network models 329
- Agricultural settings 114
- Alfalfa leaf-cutter bee 268
- Alien species 225–227
- Alkali bee 261, 268, 269
- Almond orchards 292
- Alpine-montane ecosystem 231
- Altamira cave system 3
- American Foulbrood (AFB) 123–124
- Andrena scotica* 134–135
- Androecium 4–5
- Anemophilous flowers 8
- Angiosperms 5–6, 10–11
- Anthidium manicatum* 228–229
- Anthropogenic climate change impacts 86
  - advance understanding of 98–101
  - altering pollinator cues
    - not attractive 95–96
    - not rewarding 96
  - conserving pollinators 101–103
  - extreme events 93–94
    - flames 94–95
  - information 104
  - loss of ground and moving around 90
  - synergisms 96
    - climate change and land-use change 97
    - drought and competition 97
    - pathogens and parasites 98
    - pesticides 97–98
    - warming, CO<sub>2</sub> enrichment and nitrogen deposition 96–97
  - synopsis 103–104
  - temperatures
    - behavioural adaptations 88
    - experiments 88–89
    - global warming 89
    - greenhouse effect 86
  - Meliponini species 86, 88
    - microclimates 86
    - rainfall patterns 89
    - result of 87
    - temporal and spatial mismatches
      - distribution 92–93
      - phenology 90–92
- Anthropogenic volatile pollutants (AVPs) 55
- Antimicrobial peptides (AMPs) 139
- Anti-selfing mechanism 6
- Apicystis bombi* 23, 130, 233
- Apis mellifera* 20, 60, 114–117, 186, 229–230, 315
- Apivectoring xxii
- Apple scab 345
- Araceae 51
- Arthropod pest management 344
- Artificial light at night (ALAN) 325, 330
- Assessing impact of alien bees
  - bee species 226
  - biodiversity 225
  - biological invasions 225
  - biosecurity improvement 243–245
  - direct and indirect 228
  - directly/indirectly native ecosystems 226–227
  - future trends 242
  - honey bee and bumblebee, sharing floral resource 23
  - information 245
  - issues, introduction of alien bees
    - apparent competition 233–234
    - direct interactions, interference competition 228–229
    - exploitative competition 229–233
  - Megachile sculpturalis* 234–240
  - positive and negative interactions 227
  - social and domesticated species 226
  - synopsis 240–241
- Assessing impact of disease

- defence mechanisms of bees 138-140
- disease transmission, spillover and spillback 135-138
- future trends 146-147
- honey bee diseases 114-116
  - bacteria 123-124
  - common pests 125
  - Ectoparasitic mites* 116-119
  - fungi 123
  - measuring impact, colonies 125-126
  - trypanosomes 124-125
  - viruses 119-122
- information 147
- overview 113-114
- pathogen transmission 136
- prevention 141-146
- schematic landscape, pathogen spillover and spillback 137
- synergies, risk factors 140-141
- widespread parasites and pests, wild bees 129
- wild bee diseases 127-128
  - bumble bees 128-132
  - impacts of disease 132-134
  - solitary bees 132-134
- world stock of honey bee colonies 115
- Autogamy 5
  
- Bat pollinators 10
- Bioassay system 367
- Biocontrol agents (BCAs) 360, 363
- Biodiversity and ecosystem functioning (BEF) 329
- Biotic pollination 306
- Bird pollinators 10
- Black queen cell virus (BQCV) 122, 130
- Blueberry bee (*Habropoda laboriosa*) 290
- Bombus* spp. 100-101
  - B. impatiens* 364, 365
  - B. terrestris* 24, 187, 229-231, 233, 364, 365, 368, 372-377
- Botrytis cinerea* 365, 368, 370-372
- Breeding 50-51, 56-57, 145
- Brood-site pollination 12
- Bumblebees 128-129, 264, 270-271, 359, 361-363, 367-370
  - eukaryote pests and parasites 130-131
  - major parasites and pests 128
  - microsporidia 129
  - social parasites 131-132
  - viruses 130
  - widespread protozoa 130
- Buzz pollination 270, 363
  
- Californian hedgerows 266
- Calvin cycle 49
- Calyx 4
- Centrality 314, 317
- Chalkbrood 133
- Chronic bee paralysis virus (CBPV) 121
- Climate change 79-80, 85, 97, 141
- Clonostachys rosea* 370
- Conopidae 131
- Corolla 4
- Corydalis ambigua* 100
- Crithidia* spp.
  - C. bombi* 130, 133
  - C. mellificae* 124-125, 133
- Crop fitness 18
- Crop management practices
  - case studies
    - alternative agronomic practices, assessing efficacy of 294-295
    - annual row crop systems 290-291
    - annual specialty crop systems 291-292
    - perennial forage systems 293-294
    - perennial orchard systems 292-293
  - future trends 296-297
  - managing production space, pollinators
    - cover crops 284-285
    - crop rotations 287-289
    - flowering crops 287
    - flowering weeds 285-287
    - providing protected nesting areas 289-291
    - overview 283-284, 296-297
- Cuckoo bumble bees 130-131
  
- Defence mechanisms of bees 138-140
- Deformed wing virus (DWV) 119-120, 130
- Dehisce 5
- Dichogamy 6
- Diploid fusion nucleus 5
- Dipterans 9
- DNA metabarcoding 309
- Domestication 16, 19
  
- Ecological network approaches
  - embedding pollination, agro-ecosystem networks 325-327
  - increasing pollination networks 324-325
  - networks across scales
    - farm 319-321

- field 318-319
  - landscape 321-323
  - national-scale monitoring 323
- next steps, pollination networks 328-331
- overview 305-306
- plant-pollinator networks
  - basics 306-310
  - direct and indirect
    - interactions 314-316
  - networks to address agricultural
    - challenges 316-317
    - structure matters 310-314
- Ectoparasitic mites* 116-119
- Electro-antennography (EAG) 53
- Entomovectoring
  - bumblebees as vectors 367-370
  - case study
    - BCA transport, strawberry
      - plants 374-375
    - BCA transport, vectors 375-377
    - Botrytis cinerea*, control of 371-372
    - strawberry production, *Botrytis cinerea*
      - importance 370-371
      - viability measurement, bacterial BCAs
        - of *Bombus terrestris* 372-374
  - factors 360-361
    - biocontrol agent product 366
    - biosafety 366-367
    - dispenser 363-366
    - vector 361-363
  - future trends 377-379
  - overview 359-360
- Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) scheme 319, 320
- Eukaryote pests 130
- European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC) 175
- European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) 185, 190
- European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) 197, 206
- European Foulbrood (EFB) 123-124
- Eusocial bees 260
- Exine 5
- Exploitative competition 229
  - floral resources 229-232
  - nesting sites 233
- Farina Fecundens* 3
- Feeding behaviour 117
- Feral honey bees 343
- Fertilization 5-6
- Floral rewards 12-16
- Floral traits 10-16
- Floral volatiles 49, 51-52, 55-56
- Flower-visitor network 308, 317, 325
- Flower visitors 9, 308, 310, 320
- Flying Doctors hive 365, 376
- Foliar spray applications 346
- Geitonogamy 6
- Generative nucleus 5
- Giant resin bee 263
- Gliocladium catenulatum* 365
- Global climate change 90
- Global colony dynamics 115
- Global distribution, honey bees 137
- Global warming 86, 89
- Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) 195
- Green revolution 22
- Ground nesting bees 344
- Gynoecium 4
- Habitat conservation and restoration
  - bees as pollinators 260-261
  - case studies
    - managing alkali bees 268-269
    - promoting cavity-nesting
      - bees 269-270
    - providing underground-nesting boxes,
      - bumblebees 270-271
  - challenges 262-265
  - overview 259-260
- Hand-pollinated crops 21
- Hay fever 6
- Hedgerows 266; see also Californian hedgerows; UK hedgerows
- Helianthus annuus* 15
- Herkogamy 6
- Hillesden experiment 319
- Hive inspection 126
- Honeybees 3, 139, 147, 346, 349, 352, 359, 361-363
- Hydrophilous plants 8
- Hydrophily 8
- Hylaeus alcyoneus* 230
- Individual immunity 139-140
- Insect decline 113
- Integrated pest and pollinator management (IPPM) 349-350
- Integrated pest management (IPM) 296, 349

- Intercropping 348
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 104
- International Commission on Plant-Pollinator Relationship (ICPPR) 209
- International Society of Chemical Ecology (ISCE) 65
- Intine 5
- Invasive grasses 262, 263
- Israeli acute paralysis virus (IAPV) 120-121
- Kashmir bee virus (KBV) 120-121
- Land cover 97
- Landscape simplification 22
- Land sharing 283
- Lasioglossum mahense* 315
- Leaf-cutter bee 261
- Liebefeld method 125-126
- Light microscopy 309
- Lotmaria passim* 124-125
- Mason bees 344
- Mass-flowering 348
- Megachile* spp. 88, 229
- M. rotunda* 20
- M. sculpturalis*
- history of introduction and spread 234-237
- impacts 239-240
- morphology and ecology 237-238
- native bees impacts 238-239
- Microsporidia 123, 132-133
- Mimulus* spp.
- M. cardinalis* 12
- M. lewisii* 12
- Monocultures 22, 290, 323
- Monoecious plants 6
- Motif approach 315
- Myclobutanil 346
- Nectar 12
- Nectar-feeding Lepidopterans 9
- Neonicotinoids 166
- case studies
- bumble bees, solitary *Osmia* sp. and honey bees in field conditions 173
- bumble bees on apple
- pollination 175
- oral exposure effect to thiamethoxam, bumble bee nests 174
- soil-applied imidacloprid on above-ground cavity-nesting solitary bee 174
- soil-applied imidacloprid on solitary ground-nesting squash bees 173-174
- environmental contamination 168-170
- overview 165
- pollinator exposure 168-170
- pollinators 167-168
- sublethal effects on bees 171, 172
- interactions among multiple stressors 171
- toxicity 170
- oral exposure 170-171
- topical exposure 170
- Nestedness value 314
- Network ecology 310
- Network robustness 312, 313
- Nocturnal pollinators 324, 325
- Nomia melanderi* 20
- Non-Observable Effect Concentration (NOEC) 189
- Norwood Farm Network 320, 321, 326
- Nosema* spp. 123
- N. bombi* 129
- N. ceranae* 129
- Novel methods, diagnosis and treatment 145-146
- Novel viruses 122
- Nutrition represents 141
- Olfaction in crop plant-pollinator interactions
- anthropogenic disturbance of pollination 54-55
- air 55
- climate and extreme weather events 56
- soil 55-56
- competition 56
- dioecious flower volatiles 51
- floral odour production 48-51
- floral volatiles, intraspecific variation
- dioecious flower volatiles 51
- spatio-temporal variability 51-52
- insect's learning, floral odours 53-54
- caffeine, commercial
- pollinators 58-60
- context-specific use, odour information 54
- odour lures creation 60-62

- optimal timing for pollination in tree  
crop 57-58  
overview 47  
pollinator detection, floral odours 52-53  
insect's ability, detecting crop floral  
odours 53  
Oligolectic bees 14  
Open-pollinated crop species 78-79  
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and  
Development (OECD) 190  
*Osmia* spp. 91-92, 232  
*O. bicornis* 132-133, 238  
*O. lignaria* 174  
Outcrossing 6, 20
- Paenibacillus larvae* 124  
Parasites 130  
Pathogen spillover 23  
Pesticide regulatory system 165  
Pesticides impact on pollinators  
bee testing and risk  
assessment 185-186  
case study 202-204  
ecotoxicological risk assessment 196  
assessment factors and risk  
quotients 199-200  
effects and exposure 198-199  
hazard vs. risk 198  
protection goals 196-198  
risk assessment schemes and guidance  
documents 204-206  
tiered risk assessment  
systems 200-202  
indirect and sublethal effects 206-207  
overview 183-184  
pesticide incident monitoring 209-210  
risk mitigation 207-209  
testing pesticide effects  
good laboratory practice compliance,  
quality standards for regulatory  
studies 195-196  
testing guidelines and risk assessment  
guidance documents 190-192  
testing methodologies and  
designs 188-190  
test method development and  
validation 192-195  
test species 186-188  
Pesticides impair 141  
Phenological mismatch 90-92  
Pollen transfer 6  
Pollination syndromes 15  
Pollination vectors 6  
Pollinators xix; see also *individual entries*  
Pollinators in agriculture  
agriculture impact 19-21  
and diversity 8-10  
domestication and its impact 16-17  
plant-animal interactions 18-19  
plant traits 17-18  
floral traits  
co-evolution of plants and  
pollinators 15-16  
and ecology of pollination 11-15  
flowering plants origin and  
relationship 10-11  
modern agriculture and  
pollinators 21-22  
land use and management 22-23  
non-native bee species 24  
pathogens and pesticides 23-24  
overview 3-4  
pollination 4-8  
Powdery mildew 345, 346  
Prevention of diseases 141-146
- Regrettable substitutions 167  
Ring testing 195
- Sacbrood virus (SBV) 121-122  
*Sambucus nigra* 58  
Selective breeding 50  
*Serapia* orchids 50  
Slow bee paralysis virus (SBPV) 121  
Small carpenter bees 344  
Small hive beetle 125  
Social-ecological networks (SENs) 327  
Social immunity 140  
Social insects 54  
Solitary bees 132, 261  
fungi 132-133  
*macroparasites* 133-134  
microparasites 133  
Specific Protection Goals 197, 198  
Spillover 137  
Squash bees 288, 289  
*Syntretus* sp. 131
- Thiacloprid 166  
Toxicity-Exposure Ratio (TER) 200  
Transgenic risks, grass crop species  
74-78  
*Trichoderma harzianum* 368  
*Tropilaelaps* spp. 117-118

- UK hedgerows 266
- UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme 328
- US apple production, management practices
  - for pollinator protection
  - apple diseases 345-346
  - apple orchard pollinators 343-344
  - apple pests 344-345
  - overview 341-343
  - pest management practices
    - integrated pest and pollinator management 349-350
    - for pesticide application 350-353
    - potential hazards to pollinators 346-347
    - to promote pollinators 347-349
- US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) 268
  
- Varroa control 142-143
- Varroa destructor* 116-117
- Vegetative nucleus 5
- Viruses 119-122, 144-145
- Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) 49, 53
  
- Warm-adapted 94
- Wax moths 125
- Weed management 352-353
- Wild bees 147
- Wild bumble bee 344
- Wildflower meadows 348
- Wind pollination 8
  - assessing overall transgenic risk 77
    - agricultural weed species 77-78
  - fruits and nuts 76-77
  - future trends 79-80
  - hay/forage crops 76
  - maize/corn 74-75
  - mechanisms of 73-74
  - overview 73
  - promotion 78-79
  - rice 75
  - wheat and self-pollinated grass crops 75
- Woodlands 347
  
- Xylocopa (Lestis) aerata* 95