

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick

Q. Dear Twig: Alright, I'll ask. How do native bees help us?

A. Most native bees go by two other names: **solitary bees** and **pollen bees**. Scientists call them solitary bees because most types live and nest alone, not in hives with thousands of others.

And scientists call them pollen bees because they (the bees) fly from flower to flower and gather up lots of **pollen** to eat.

The process spreads pollen from flower to flower because some of it falls off or rubs off the bees. The stuff is really powdery.

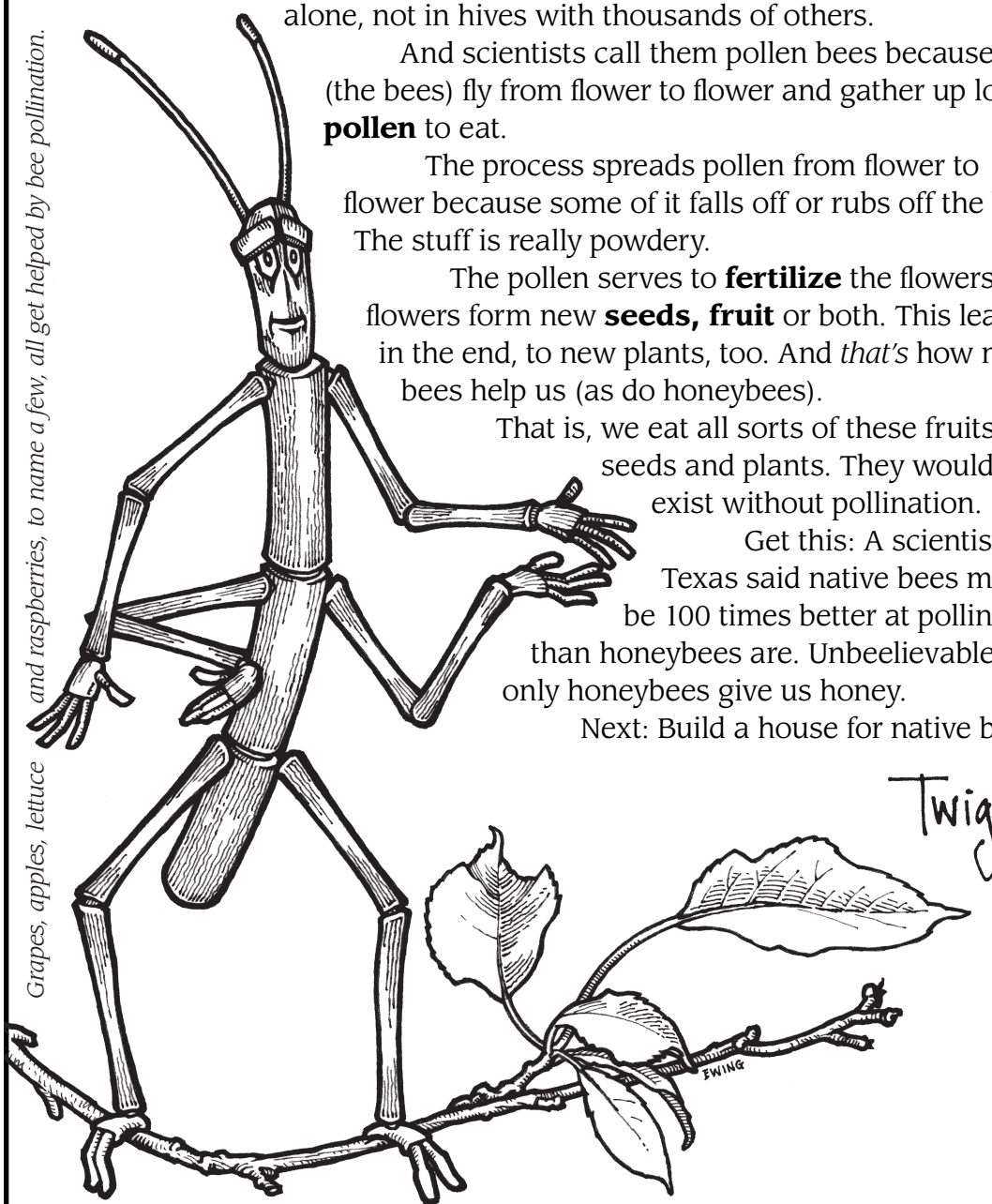
The pollen serves to **fertilize** the flowers. The flowers form new **seeds, fruit** or both. This leads, in the end, to new plants, too. And *that's* how native bees help us (as do honeybees).

That is, we eat all sorts of these fruits, seeds and plants. They wouldn't exist without pollination.

Get this: A scientist in Texas said native bees might be 100 times better at pollinating than honeybees are. Unbelievable! But only honeybees give us honey.

Next: Build a house for native bees!

Grapes, apples, lettuce and raspberries, to name a few, all get helped by bee pollination.



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (www.oardc.ohio-state.edu) and OSU Extension (extension.osu.edu).



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Notes: Other crops that need or benefit from bee pollination include (but aren't limited to) carrots, onions, melons, pumpkins, celery, cucumbers, strawberries and sunflowers, plus clover and alfalfa, which farmers grow to feed to their livestock. Read the whole list and more in OSU Extension's "Bee Pollination of Crops in Ohio," <http://ohioline.osu.edu/b559>. Sources also included "Most Bees Live Alone," *Science News*, Jan. 6, 2007, and "Native Bees Could Fill Pollinator Hole Left by Honeybees," from Texas A&M University by way of *ScienceDaily*, March 14, 2006. About 3,500 of North America's 4,000 or so native bee species are solitary bees.

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