

Flowering Plants as a Source of Food for Parasitic and Predatory Insects

Dr. E. Hassan

Department of Plant Protection, University of Queensland, Gatton College, Lawes (Gatton), Queensland 4313
Australia

Abstract

Beneficial insects must have a continuous food supply if biological or integrated pest control is to be successful. In many situations crop pests must become the major food source of the beneficial insects for a certain stage of their life cycle. To enable these insects to survive or complete their life cycle, different sources of food may be required. It is in this situation that weeds play a major role in supplying the alternate food source, such as pollen, nectar and alternate host. They also become an alternate feeding site when crop pests are not present, and if the crop does not supply pollen or nectar. Beneficial insects obviously require this alternate food source, because many agricultural and horticultural crops are harvested before they flower. Those which will flower, will not flower all year round and in the same way crop pests are not always present. Even if crop pests are present all year round there are usually times when the crop is not present. This makes weeds an ideal alternative food source because there are always some weeds flowering and supplying useful amounts of pollen and nectar for adult parasites and some predators. In those times of the year when crops are not present, they also provide alternate hosts for parasites and predators.