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Abundance of adult hover flies (Diptera: Syrphidae) on different flowering plants

Encouraging natural enemies by growing attractant plants is considered an effective methods of pest control in organic farming. However, it is important to identify which flowers best attract beneficial insects. In this study, relative attractiveness of 16 species of flowering plants to adult hover flies was assessed by conducting timed observations of feeding-visit frequencies. The experiments were conducted at two sites, at FUM Research Farm and FUM Campus in a completely randomized design with 3 replications. At both sites, the mean numbers of feeding-visits to selected flowers by hover flies differed significantly. At the Research Farm, Fennel, Chamomile, Hypericum, Yarrow, Lavender and Bishop's weed had higher visitation rates than Marigold, Spider ivy, Sage, Dill and Dwarf Lark Spur. At this site, Fennel followed by Hypericum and Yarrow attracted more hoverflies than other flowers throughout the season. Lavender and Bishop's weed that were less attractive on early sampling dates received more hover flies toward end of season. At the FUM Campus, Petunia, Chamomile and Cosmos were the most attractive flowers whereas Ageratum, Yarrow and Coreopsis were of intermediate visit status and Pot marigold was relatively under visited. Overall, Cosmos, Petunia and Chamomile were visited more frequently than other floral resources, but their attractiveness were not constant throughout the season. On the first two sampling dates, Chamomile was the most preferred flower, but on the last two dates of sampling Cosmos was highly attractive to hover flies. The hoverflies found in the study sites were: *Sphaerophoria scripta* (L.), *Episyrphus balteatus* (De-Geer), *Eupeodes corollae* (Fab.), *Syrphus ribesii* (L.), *Eupeodes nuba* (Wied.), *Syrphus vitripennis* (Meigen), *Paragus bicolor* (Fabr.), *Sphaerophoria ruppellii* (Wied.), *Paragus tibialis* (Fallen), *Eristalis* spp., *Syrirta pipiens*. Among the aphidophagous species, the most abundant species were: *Sphaerophoria scripta*, *Episyrphus balteatus* and *Eupeodes corollae*.