

Extension Master Gardener Pollinator Program

The Situation

Bees are integral to the state's economy, but they are in trouble. Native bees are important because they pollinate fruit and vegetable crops. However, their populations are declining due to habitat loss. Similarly, a recent USDA survey indicated that 17-18% of European honey bee colonies were lost in the first quarters of 2015 and 2016. This is troubling news for a state that is #1 in honey production. Fortunately, the news need not be dire. Individuals can help by providing habitat and nourishing forage for our pollinators.

Extension Response

The Extension Master Gardener Program began an educational initiative to build pollinator gardens and to use pesticides wisely. In 2016, the Program funded and built 19 public pollinator gardens to use as teaching gardens. An online map shows the garden locations to facilitate public visitation. In addition, *Bee-utiful Landscapes: Building a Pollinator Garden* H1811 was published as a resource. The goal is for Master Gardeners and agents to hold workshops in the public gardens to inspire homeowners to plant or expand their gardens to provide habitat and food for local pollinators. As an incentive, homeowners committed to meeting certain requirements can also apply for a free Master Gardener Certified Pollinator Garden sign.



Impacts

Nineteen public gardens were planted in 2016 totaling 13,800 square feet of pollinator habitat. Master Gardeners and agents conducted educational programming in 8 of the gardens for a total of 164 participants. The initiative generated 6 newspaper articles, 5 radio segments, and 1 television appearance. More importantly, the Program prompted homeowners to build or retrofit existing gardens to incorporate native pollinator plants, to include water sources, and to pledge sustainable pesticide use. In total, 47 home gardens were either built or retrofitted to provide 61,486 square feet of pollinator habitat in ND, MN, and SD.

Public Value Statement

Healthy pollinators are vital to the environment and sustainability of Agriculture. The Extension Master Gardener program is promoting pollinator-friendly gardens and wise pesticide use.

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Resource Links

Public Garden Locations:
<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/mastergardener/ndsu-extension-pollinator-garden-map-1>