

Bee City USA® Designation

Staff Report

Launched in 2012, the goal of Bee City USA is to promote healthy, sustainable habitats and communities for bees and other pollinators. To become certified, interested cities and counties must apply and pass a resolution that includes a set of commitments to support pollinators. As of December 2015, fifteen cities in eight states were certified and the list continues to grow!

Bee City USA describes ideal pollinator-friendly habitat as that which includes diverse and abundant nectar and pollen, mostly of native annual and perennial wildflowers, shrubs, trees and grasses. In addition, the habitat should provide clean water, should be pesticide-free or have pesticide use carried out with least ill effects on pollinators, and when possible, should be marked with signage to educate the public and build awareness.

Bee City USA also requires that certified cities identify a citizens' committee or non-profit to oversee the pollinator conservation activities of the city; designate a municipal department as a sponsor; annually celebrate the designation with a proclamation and public activities; and acknowledge the Bee City designation through signage and weblinks. Cities must annually apply for recertification, which requires a report on accomplishments of the previous year.

Benefits for communities certified as a Bee City USA include:

- Credibility for municipality and grassroots pollinator conservation efforts,
- Institutionalization of the community's commitment,
- Paves the way for widespread collaboration to establish and maintain healthy pollinator habitat within the municipality's boundaries.

Becoming a Bee City USA improves:

- Local food production through expanded pollination. More than 150 food crops in the United States depend on pollinators, including blueberries, apples, squash, strawberries and almonds.
- Local plant nursery markets by increasing demand for native, pollinator friendly plants.
- Pride in local food products, such as artisanal honey.



Becoming a Bee City USA raises community awareness of:

- How our food grows,
- The dangers of non-native invasive plants to the local ecosystem,
- The least toxic ways to deal with home and garden pest problems,
- Seasonality in the local environment.

WHEREAS, the goal of *BEE CITY USA* is to promote healthy, sustainable habitats and communities for bees and other pollinators; and

WHEREAS, thanks to the tremendous diversity of wild native bees, along with the honey bees that were brought here from Europe in the 1700s, we have very diverse dietary choices rich in fruits, nuts and vegetables: *"One in every three bites of food we eat is courtesy of insect pollination. Even our meat and milk trace back to insects that pollinate the alfalfa and other feed for beef cattle and cows"* (Mace Vaughan, Pollinator Program Director for the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation); and

WHEREAS, bees and other pollinators around the globe have experienced dramatic declines due to a combination of habitat loss, use of pesticides, and the spread of pests and diseases, with grave implications for the future health of flora and fauna; and

WHEREAS, communities have the opportunity to support bees and other pollinators on both public and private land; and

WHEREAS, supporting pollinators fosters environmental awareness and sustainability, and increases interactions among community stewards such as commercial and backyard beekeepers, farmers, children, educators, Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, plant nurseries, municipalities, neighborhoods, and garden suppliers and clubs; and

WHEREAS, the economic benefits of (native and honey) bee-friendliness are:

- Healthy ecosystems--insect pollinators are required for pollination and reproduction of about 85% of flowering plants globally, plants that: 1) are vital for clean air and water; 2) provide food, fiber and shelter for people and wildlife; and 3) support the very insects that pollinate our crops and form the basis of food webs.
- Increased vegetable and fruit crop yields due to bee pollination.
- Increased habitat for natural enemies of crop pests and therefore reduced need for and costs associated with pesticides.
- Increased demand for pollinator-friendly plant materials from local nurseries and growers.
- Income earned by beekeepers and others through the sale of bee products, beekeeping equipment and supplies, and hive rentals for pollination; and, heightened prestige and premium asking prices for place-based honey, which enhances the visibility and reputation of its community of origin; and

WHEREAS, ideal pollinator-friendly habitat:

- Provides diverse and abundant nectar and pollen from plants blooming in succession.
- Provides clean water for drinking, nest-building, cooling, diluting stored honey, and butterfly puddling.
- Is pesticide-free or has pesticide use carried out with the least ill effects on pollinators.
- Is comprised of mostly, if not all, native species of annual and perennial wildflowers, shrubs, trees, and grasses because many native pollinators prefer or depend on the native plants with which they co-evolved.

Includes, where possible, designated pollinator zones in public spaces with signage to educate the public and build awareness.

- Provides for safe and humane removal of bees when required.
- Provides undisturbed spaces (leaf and brush piles, un-mowed fields or field margins, fallen trees and other dead wood) for nesting and overwintering for native pollinators; and

WHEREAS, in order to enhance understanding among local government staff and the public about the vital role that pollinators play and what each of us can do to sustain them, the City of Annapolis, in partnership with Anne Arundel County, Maryland and the Town of Highland Beach, Maryland agrees to meet the following commitments required of all *BEE CITY USA* communities:

1) Pass this *BEE CITY USA* resolution (which articulates these commitments).

2) Designate a local government department as the Bee City USA sponsor and an employee from that department as the Bee City USA "liaison;" and assign facilitation of the local Bee City USA program either to a) a new or existing commission or b) a non-profit organization, to encourage and coordinate local pollinator habitat and awareness activities. This body will serve as the intermediary between the citizenry and local government on matters of enhancing pollinator awareness, health and habitat, fulfilling the following commitments:

Annually celebrate National Pollinator Week (third full week of June) or some other appropriate occasion with educational events, pollinator habitat plantings or restoration, proclamations or promotions that showcase the municipality's commitment to enhancing pollinator health and habitat.

Annually apply for renewal of the community's designation and submit a report of the previous year's *BEE CITY USA* activities following the format provided.

3) Publicly acknowledge the community's commitment by agreeing to a) install/maintain at least one authorized *BEE CITY USA* street sign in a prominent location, and b) create/maintain links on appropriate pages of the local government's website which includes, at minimum, links to a PDF of this signed Resolution and the national *BEE CITY USA* website, contact information for the local government's *BEE CITY USA* liaison and designated "facilitator commission or non-profit organization committee," and reports of the pollinator-friendly activities the community has accomplished the previous year(s).

Prepared by Maria Broadbent, Director, Department of Neighborhood and Environmental Programs.