

Bee-Friendly Backyards: Promoting Landscape Practices that Support Pollinators and Other Beneficial Insects

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Putnam County Master Gardener Volunteer, Janis Butler exemplifies the passion and research these volunteers brought to bear on issues surrounding pollinators in managed landscapes. In addition to researching and writing two articles on pollinators, Janis organized six other MGVs to deliver a “Beauty and the Bees” teaching area at our May plant sale, highlighting native plant/pollinator interactions. She also delivered a program at Stonecrop Gardens on plant families that support pollinators. Other dedicated volunteers in surrounding counties helped us develop a pollinator photo database for outreach and web use. Creating consistent materials, helps deliver a unified message about the importance of pollinators and our roles in their stewardship.

Addressing Needs: Federal and NY State task forces have been organized to address the pollinator crisis. Part of NYS’s planned response includes outreach and education. Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators and Master Gardener Volunteers provide an avenue for reaching into communities and businesses to deliver this education.

Peer-to-Peer Education: Harnessing the multiplying factor of peer-to-peer education, Jen Stengle organized a six-county Master Gardener Volunteer training (attended by 46 MGVs) which brought experts on native and managed pollinators to one venue. Emma Mullen of Cornell University, Jody Gangloff-Kaufmann of NYS IPM and native bee expert, Tim Stanley, delivered the program. MGVs attending the program identified action steps for their county and reflected on barriers to adopting pollinator-friendly practices.

The Multiplying Effect: Volunteers and Educators who attended this program went home to their counties and taught 14 hands-on or lecture style programs reaching more than 530 attendees. Tabling events (6) at Farmer’s Markets and fairs provided excellent opportunities for one-on-one conversations (250 contacts). These trained volunteers were also inspired to write several articles that ran in 3 newspapers and 3 newsletters (indirect contacts estimated at 250,000). They also created garden signage that reached many more: MGVs added “Bee-informed” signage to 3 existing demonstration gardens in two counties, with two additional pollinator gardens started from scratch.

Developing Collaborative Resources across the state: MGVs and CCE educators identified “bee-friendly” outreach needs: like peer-reviewed ready-to-use articles and fact sheets, power point presentations, stand-up displays and well-designed garden signage. Online file sharing allowed CCE educators to post resources as they were developed, at first on a regional level and then at a statewide level. Collaborating with Cornell Plantations Interpretation Coordinator Sarah Fiorello, Jen Stengle helped create pollinator garden signs that reflected questions, concerns and important facts identified by MGVs and CCE educators. An October 13th rollout for CCE Educators announced these pollinator resources, file sharing location and use instructions. View these at putnam.cce.cornell.edu/gardening/create-a-pollinator-paradise (under *resources for educators*)



Part of our program evaluation included a question for workshop attendees: what **barriers** lay between just *thinking* about pollinator friendly practices and actually *adopting* those practices. The “Wordle” above graphically illustrates the combined comments. This helped us steer the development of resources, articles and interpretive signs.