**Template Op-Ed or Blog for Distribution to Bee City USA / Bee Campus USA Affiliates**

**Pollinator Week 2022**

***Instructions****: Choose the correct* ***bolded/italicized*** *option for your affiliate, insert your affiliate name where indicated, add examples from your area as desired, and finalize. Publish as a blog where it will receive wide distribution or even better, submit as an op-ed to your local newspaper.*

**Ecologically Based Pest Management—For the Sake of Pollinators**

Bees and butterflies are in trouble. How do we know they’re in trouble? Well, biologists, with the aid of community scientists, are out there searching. And what they’re finding, over and over, are fewer bees and butterflies, together with shrinking ranges. For example, a quarter of our bumble bees are declining, and one, the rusty patched bumble bee, has suffered so badly, it is protected under federal law. And that’s just one group of bees that have been better studied.

This is a serious problem, starting with our food supply. If you like cherries or watermelon at this time of year, thank a bee. If you munch on sunflower seeds or drink almond milk, a bee made that possible. But the benefits from pollinators cannot be truly measured solely by their value to our food supply. Pollinators are at the heart of a healthy environment and support plant communities that provide food and shelter for many other animals. And did you know butterflies are not simply a charming addition to the flower garden? Caterpillars are vital to birds as an important food source for rearing their young.

Pollinators are declining partly due changes in our landscapes, and partly because pesticides are an increasing problem. As a group, pesticides used in the U.S. are far more toxic to insects than they were 25 years ago—and many are extremely long-lived. A seemingly innocuous pesticide applied to flowering shrubs or trees may result in toxic residues lasting years in those landscape plants, exposing bees as they gather nectar and pollen and caterpillars as they nibble leaves.

Many have forgotten that it is normal and beneficial for landscapes to host insects. Insects may cause periodic nuisance problems such as leaf blemishes, honeydew drip or even defoliation. Such sights do not necessarily signal that the plant is dying or even unhealthy, and while they may be unwelcome, these issues are often primarily aesthetic. Meanwhile, these plants are providing valuable food and habitat for a whole community of insects and other animals.

Luckily, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***city/campus name***, is a proud member of the Xerces Society’s Bee City USA program. This means that our ***city/campus*** has committed to conserving, celebrating, and enhancing habitat for pollinators.

Bee **City/Campus** USA affiliates also commit to reduce the use of pesticides. This is an important commitment, both in residential areas and in parks and other open spaces. For ***public/campus*** lands, affiliates develop and adopt an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan to guide pest management efforts. IPM is a strategy for maintaining healthy landscapes that focuses on long term prevention or suppression of pest problems. According to the Xerces Society, this ecologically based pest management approach seeks to eliminate the *underlying causes* of plant diseases, weeds, and insect problems, rather than relying on routine use of pesticides.

What can you do to help ***\_\_\_\_\_(city/campus name)*** achieve this commitment?

1. ***[If the city or campus already has an IPM plan use this paragraph]*** Get familiar with our city/campus IPM plan. Your interest and involvement in management of our public spaces could have lasting benefits.

Review the plan to understand how it addresses reducing reliance on pesticides and protects important resources like pollinators. If you have ideas for improving elements of it,, don’t hesitate to ask for updates.

***[If the city or campus does not already have an IPM plan, use this paragraph]***  Consider asking to be part of a stakeholder committee to help develop the plan. As the plan unfolds, offer your ideas. Important aspects that can help cities and campuses reduce their reliance on pesticides include robust use of non-chemical strategies to make the habitat less welcoming for pests; asking the city/campus to avoid pesticide use except where plant or ecosystem health is at stake; and ensuring that highly toxic pesticides like neonicotinoids are off the table.

For more information, check out the Xerces Society guide, [*Smarter Pest Management: Pollinator Protection for Cities and Campuses*](https://xerces.org/publications/fact-sheets/smarter-pest-management-pollinator-protection-cities-campuses)*.* This guide is a short and useful checklist developed to help cities and campuses create and implement quality IPM programs.

Don’t forget to take a look at another guide from the Xerces Society, [Pollinator-Friendly Parks](https://xerces.org/publications/guidelines/pollinator-friendly-parks), packed full of useful examples showing how parks can provide the maximum benefit for pollinators and other insects.

1. You can also help spread the word among your neighbors. A good place to start is by looking at the Xerces Society’s [Bring Back the Pollinators](https://xerces.org/bring-back-the-pollinators) campaign and taking the [Pollinator Protection Pledge](https://xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/pollinator-protection-pledge), which is simple and fun. You commit to creating and protecting habitat for bees and butterflies in your own yard, avoiding pesticides (especially insecticides), and talking to your neighbors about the importance of pollinators. If you take this pledge, please let your affiliate committee know about it. ***(Add Contact information)***

Your efforts matter. The choices we make as communities and individuals directly impact the health of pollinator communities. We invite you to get involved with the conservation of bees and work to help our community reduce the use of pesticides.