

# Bee Campus USA - Vassar College

Report on 2024

## Pollinator Habitat Creation & Enhancement

*Please describe pollinator habitat creation or enhancement projects in your community in 2024, and whether your committee hosted them or not.*

In the Spring of 2024, volunteers helped plant over 300 native trees through New York's Trees for Tributaries Program. The restoration project will help to improve water quality, reduce erosion, and promote a native habitat for plants and animals, including pollinators. Bee Campus Committee members continued participating in a local Pollinator Pathway initiative, collaborating with our local municipality to promote pollinator habitats. We also propagated native wildflowers that were given away to local community groups and used on campus to supplement current pollinator gardens. In 2024, the Foundation Plots were enhanced to amplify native seed for campus restoration projects, pollinator gardens, and to share with groups in the community. The Foundation Plots were planted with local ecotypes of Blue Lobelia, Late Blooming Purple Aster, Black Eyed Susan, swamp milkweed, indiagrass, big bluestem, columbine, little bluestem, yarrow, obedient plant, and foxglove beardtongue. Bee Campus members maintained local pollinator gardens and habitats on campus at Wimpfheimer nursery school, the Environmental Cooperative Barn, the Priscilla Bullitt Collins Field Station, Sunset Lake, and the Kenyon tree planting.

*How many habitat projects did you help to create or enhance in 2024?*

8

*How many people (staff, volunteers, students, partners, etc.) helped with those projects?*

67

*How many projects benefit monarchs, milkweed, or nectar plantings?*

2

*How many total square feet of habitat were created or enhanced?*

52400

*Please check all that describe the habitats your affiliate helped to create or enhance last year with pollinator benefit in mind.*

- Flower garden
- Natural area with tree snags and stumps, and bare areas for ground nesting species
- Meadow

- Pollinator-friendly lawn (with flowering clover, dandelions...)
  - Native milkweed planting for monarchs and bees (where appropriate)
  - Invasive/exotic plant species removal for habitat improvement
  - Native pollinator-friendly tree planting
  - Native pollinator-friendly shrub border/hedgerow planting
  - School garden
- 

## Education & Outreach

*Please describe pollinator conservation events or outreach activities in your community in 2024, indicating whether your committee hosted them or not.*

Exploring Science Programs Programs are held throughout the year at the Preserve to educate local 2nd grade students to engage with the nature around them and the local pollinators on the Preserve. Tours: During 2024, several tours were given of the Preserve at Vassar restoration site which highlighted plantings of native trees, shrubs and herbaceous species. These events included reunion, class visits, prospective transfer students, and Vassar Families Weekend. Trees for Tributaries Planting(s) Native, pollinator-friendly tree plantings occurred at various sites across the Preserve throughout the year to bolster native plant communities and habitats. These include riparian areas and larger ongoing restoration projects. More than 400 trees were planted throughout the year. Invasive species removal events: A team of students worked multiple times throughout the year on invasive species removal projects across the Preserve to bolster native habitats. Native Plant Propagation Program: A recently developed program that works to increase the availability of locally sourced, native seed for restoration projects and community dissemination. Plugs of native wildflowers and grasses are donated to community organizations for restoration work and pollinator garden establishment.

*How many pollinator-related events or outreach activities did you host or help with in 2024 (in total)?*

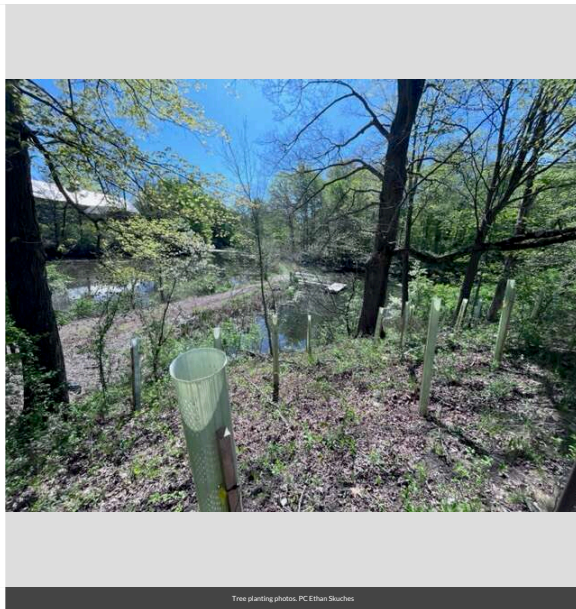
20

*How many people attended those events (in total)?*

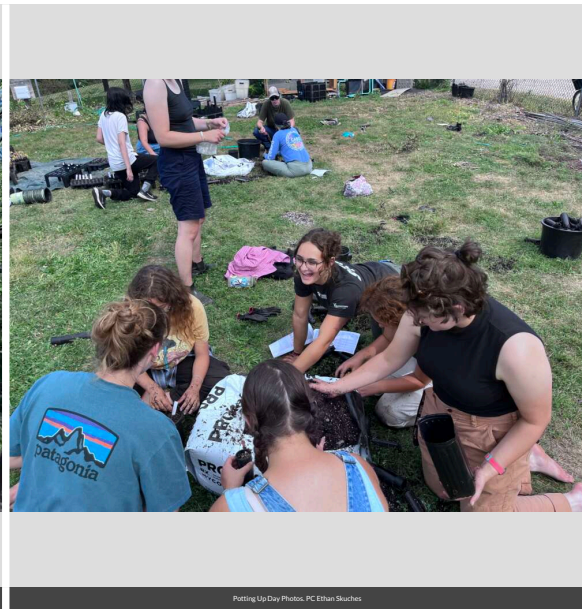
345



Swamp millweed foundation plot, PC Ethan Skutches



Tree planting photos, PC Ethan Skutches



Potting Day Photos, PC Ethan Skutches

## Curriculum, Continuing Education, & Service Learning

*Please describe the curriculum your campus engaged in 2024, indicating whether it was part of a for-credit course or continuing education.*

**For Credit Courses:** Conservation Biology Biol/ENST 352 Uses a multidisciplinary approach to study how to best maintain the earth's biodiversity and functioning ecosystems. We examine human impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem function and discuss how to develop practical approaches for mitigating those impacts. We start the semester by assessing the current human footprint on global resources, asking questions about what we are trying to preserve, why we are trying to preserve it, and how we can accomplish our goals. We critically examine the assumptions made by conservation biologists throughout, using case studies from around the world to explore a range of perspectives. Discussion topics include conservation in an agricultural context, the efficacy of marine protected areas, the impact of climate change on individual species and preserve design, restoration ecology, the consequences of small population sizes, conservation genetics, the impacts of habitat fragmentation and invasive species, and urban ecology. Margaret Ronsheim. Essentials in Environmental Science ENST-124 A lecture/laboratory course in which basic topics in environmental biology, geology, and chemistry are covered with examples from current environmental issues used to illustrate the application and interdisciplinary nature of these fields. This course treats the following topics: energy sources and waste products, atmospheric patterns and climate, biogeochemical cycles, properties of soils and water, and ecological processes. Using these topics as a platform, this course examines the impact humanity has on the environment and discusses strategies to diminish those effects. The laboratory component includes field trips, field investigations, and laboratory exercises. Mary Ann Cunningham, Myra Hughey, Deon Knights. Ecology BIOL 241 Population growth, species interaction, and community patterns and processes of species or groups of species are discussed. The course emphasizes these interactions within the framework of evolutionary theory. Local habitats and

organisms are used as examples of how organisms are distributed in space, how populations grow, why species are adapted to their habitats, how species interact, and how communities change. Field laboratories at Vassar Farm and other localities emphasize the formulation of answerable questions and methods to test hypotheses. Lynn Christenson. Biol 208 Plant Diversity and Evolution Plant structure and function is examined in a phylogenetic context. Emphasis is placed on adaptations to novel and changing environments as well as plant-animal and plant-fungal coevolution, including plant-pollinator and plant-herbivore interactions. Laboratories include comparative study of the divisions of plants and the identification of locally common plants and fungi in the field. Margaret Ronsheim.

*How many of your for-credit courses included pollinator-related information in 2024?*

4

*How many students attended those for-credit courses?*

80

*Please describe the service-learning projects your students were engaged in 2024, indicating which, if any, were associated with a course.*

**Trees for Tributaries Planting** – This project seeks to repair and restore a riparian area along an impounded tributary of the Casperkill Creeke. By planting native trees and shrubs, we will expand the riparian buffer and diversify its edge. This will improve water quality by reducing erosion, sedimentation, and runoff and will provide new habitat for plant and animal species, including pollinators. Student volunteers and classes assisted with the plantings over 2 days planting over 300 trees. **Native Plant Propagation Program & Potting Up Day**- This program focuses on amplifying the availability of ecotypic native plant materials for use in restoration projects and pollinator garden establishment.

*How many service-learning projects did your campus host and/or support to enhance pollinator habitat on- and off- campus?*

3

*How many students participated in service-learning projects in 2024 to enhance pollinator habitat on or off-campus?*

65

---

## Policies & Practices

*Please describe actions taken to make pest management more pollinator-friendly.*

In 2024, Vassar maintained an Integrated Pest Management Plan. Vassar’s IPM plan uses pest management when and where needed, not blanket coverage. An Integrated Pest Management plan is a set of guidelines which provides a framework for sustainable management of pests by using educational, biological, physical, and chemical tools to reduce both economic, environmental, and health risks. In this document, “pests” refers to both animals and plants that pose some risk to the college or campus users. This includes organisms such as invasive vines, insects and mammals that are

destructive to landscaping, natural areas, and infrastructure. At Vassar College, the goals of the IPM program are the following: 1. Control pests which pose a threat to campus users, landscaping, and the ecology of campus natural areas. 2. Prevent pest caused damages to buildings and infrastructure. 3. Protect the health of the community by employing the least-toxic strategies for pest control. 4. Reduce the use of chemicals known to be toxic to both humans and the environment. 5. Create protocols for applying pesticides in secured and targeted areas. 6. Establish standards for what context pesticides should be used given that all other protocols have either failed or are known to be ineffective.

*In your city or campus, are any policy initiatives underway to further protect pollinators, people or waterways from pesticides?*

N/A

*Did your committee participate in any continuing education on ecologically-based Integrated Pest Management planning?*

N/A

*Please check actions you have taken to make pest management practices more pollinator-friendly.*

- Implemented or maintained a written IPM plan
- Sourced plants for city or campus grounds that were not treated with neonicotinoids

*Any lessons learned you would like to share?*

**Operating at a feasible scope/ scale.**

---

Committee Photo

---

Learn More

Integrated Pest Management Plan: [Vassar College IPM\\_FINAL.pdf](#)

Recommended Native Plant List: [nativeplantspt2.pdf](#)

Recommended Native Plant Supplier List: [nativeplantsupplierword.docx](#)

<https://offices.vassar.edu/environmental-cooperative/>  
[thecoop@vassar.edu](mailto:thecoop@vassar.edu)

[https://instagram.com/@eco\\_vc](https://instagram.com/@eco_vc)