

Bee City USA - Austin

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 2024, numerous pollinator habitat creation and enhancement projects took place across the community, led by various organizations dedicated to ecological restoration and conservation. The Trail Conservancy focused on ecological restoration around Lady Bird Lake, a critical refuge for wildlife within the city. As the primary stewards of the Ann & Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail and nearly 300 acres of surrounding parkland, the Conservancy engaged volunteers in litter abatement, planting, seeding, and invasive species removal. An innovative approach to vegetation management involved the use of goats to control invasive and noxious plant species, improving habitat quality while also enhancing park safety by reducing wildfire risks and increasing visibility. The Pease Park Conservancy hosted Pocket Prairie Workshops, providing education on soil health, seed banks, and the ecological benefits of pocket prairies. Participants engaged in hands-on habitat restoration by building a pocket prairie in the riparian area of Kingsbury Commons, replacing invasive species with native plants. During the Roots & Wings Festival, multiple organizations facilitated events focused on habitat creation and restoration. The South Austin Creek Alliance educated volunteers on urban waterways and their surrounding ecosystems. Grow Green hosted a Fall Garden Party, highlighting how native and adapted plants support pollinators and demonstrating eco-friendly landscaping techniques like rain gardens. St. Edward's University welcomed the community to explore its two-year-old Food Forest, offering discussions on edible and medicinal plants, pollination science, and the intersection of ecology and art. Ecology Action engaged families in pollinator conservation through hands-on activities such as making seed balls, planting pollinator-friendly plants, and interactive educational tables. Another major community effort in 2024 was It's My Park Day, Austin Parks Foundation's biannual, community-led day of service. Volunteers participated in park and green space improvement projects, including litter cleanup, tree mulching, and invasive species management, all of which contribute to healthier habitats for pollinators. This long-standing tradition brought together 6,905 volunteers in the spring and fall, resulting in the spreading of 1,529 cubic yards of mulch, the collection of 76,750 pounds of trash, and the beautification of 200 sites across Austin. By mobilizing the community to care for these spaces, It's My Park Day plays a vital role in enhancing pollinator-friendly environments and fostering a shared commitment to conservation. PARD Land Management enhanced pollinator habitats through broadcast burns and pile burns, which restore ecosystems by reducing ground cover, opening the forest canopy, and enriching soil nutrients to promote wildflower growth. These efforts increase floral resources vital for pollinators while also reducing invasive species and hazardous fuel loads. In 2024, seven broadcast burns were conducted across 576.6 acres at Decker Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and Louis René Barrera Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary. Additionally, five pile burns removed 794 individual piles and 109 tons of biomass, creating healthier, more resilient landscapes that support pollinators and native plant regeneration.

The Community Gardens Program supports the creation and maintenance of community gardens on city-owned land, providing resources for both new and existing projects. With assistance from nonprofit partners who offer grants, volunteer coordination, and liability insurance, these gardens serve as long-term stewardship projects where people come together to care for the land. The program includes 29 community gardens, featuring 787 individual plots, food forests, community orchards, teaching gardens, and senior gardens, fostering both environmental sustainability and community engagement. These efforts collectively contributed to expanding and enhancing pollinator-friendly habitats throughout the community while fostering public engagement in conservation initiatives.

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

75

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

9000

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

200

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

50355360

Please check all that describe the habitats your affiliate helped to create or enhance in 2024 with pollinator benefit in mind.

- Flower garden
- Vegetable garden
- Orchard
- Natural area with tree snags and stumps, and bare areas for ground nesting species
- Meadow
- Pollinator-friendly lawn (with flowering clover, dandelions...)
- Herb garden
- 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

- Rain garden/bioswale
 - Roadside/rights of way 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.

Pollinator outreach events encompassed a wide range of activities, from educational presentations and exhibits to hands-on experiences like a pollinator carnival, the City Nature Challenge, and the iNaturalist Bioblitz. Citywide festivals such as Roots & Wings and It's My Park Day also played a key role in engaging the community. The Bee City Committee organized educational presentations and webinars featuring local experts like John Davis and Carla Salas. Additionally, committee members spoke at garden clubs and universities, sharing insights with students studying conservation, historical preservation, tourism, and architecture. Beyond formal presentations, numerous interactive events highlighted the importance of pollinators in our ecosystem. Families enjoyed the Pollinator Pop-Quiz at the Austin Public Library, while educational booths at plant sales and neighborhood swaps provided valuable resources. The Roots & Wings Festival, a citywide celebration of trees and pollinators, featured 192 individual events across Austin, reaching an estimated 23,346 people. Another notable event was the art exhibit Power the Migration: A Monarch Exhibition at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. The Austin Public Library collaborated with Central Texas Seed Savers to promote sustainability, raise awareness about native plants, and improve local food security. This partnership led to the creation of an annual seed exchange event and seed libraries at municipal library branches. During Pollinator Week, events were hosted citywide, including Pollinator Day at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, which underscored the vital connection between pollinators and human survival. The Bee City Committee, Austin Parks and Recreation Department, and the Central Library offered programs and activities throughout the week, while local businesses and nonprofits also launched independent initiatives to support pollinator conservation. It's My Park Day, organized by the Austin Parks Foundation, is a biannual community service event dedicated to improving Austin's parks and green spaces. Volunteers participate in projects such as litter cleanup, tree mulching, invasive species removal, and pollinator garden installations. In 2024, the event featured 190 projects and mobilized 6,905 volunteers to help beautify the city. A Parks and Recreation Department staff member at the Zilker Botanical Garden led efforts to mobilize citizen scientists through the Bee Monitoring Program, which encourages participants to observe and document native Texas bees. The project focuses on recording photographic observations and behavioral notes, including documenting plant species used by native bees for foraging and nesting. These observations are uploaded to iNaturalist, contributing valuable data to the broader scientific understanding of native bee diversity in Travis County. More than 70 people attended one of the two Bee Monitoring Program presentations to learn about

bee conservation and how they can help protect native bees in Central Texas. The Texas Master Naturalist program, established in 1997, trains volunteers to conserve and manage Texas' natural resources. In Travis County, the Capital Area and Balcones Canyonlands chapters actively engage the community, hosting nearly 200 education and outreach events in 2024. Their programs focus on Central Texas' natural habitats and wildlife, offering presentations to civic groups, youth organizations, and HOAs, as well as interactive displays at school fairs and community events. They also provide classroom presentations and guided informal hikes, fostering a deeper understanding of local ecosystems and conservation efforts.

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

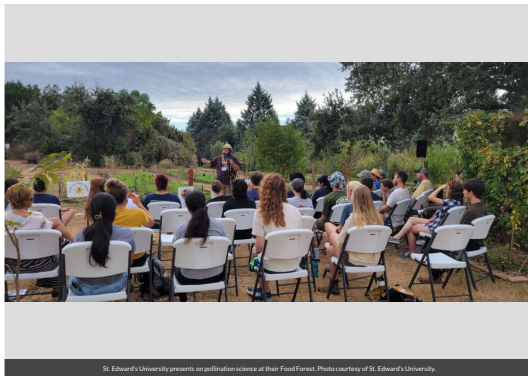
500

How many people attended those events (in total)?

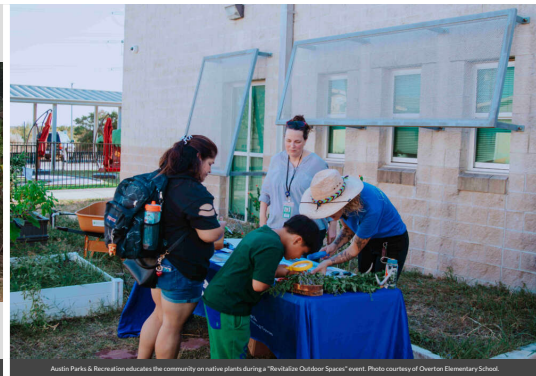
49000



Family learns how to make a seed ball at Austin Nature & Science Center. Photo credit: Sterling Coats.



St. Edward's University presents on pollination science at their Food Forest. Photo courtesy of St. Edward's University.



Austin Parks & Recreation educates the community on native plants during a "Revitalize Outdoor Spaces" event. Photo courtesy of Overton Elementary School.

Policies & Practices

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

The City of Austin has long followed a pollinator-friendly pest management plan, with significant updates to its Integrated Pest Management Program (IPMP) in 2017 and 2021. These revisions aimed to refine current practices, establish a clear understanding of goals and objectives, and standardize policies, procedures, and best management practices. The updated program outlines when to use mechanical, physical, chemical, cultural, or biological methods while also serving as a training tool for employees. By implementing these improvements, the City ensures its pest management strategies remain effective, efficient, and aligned with ecological sustainability.

Are efforts underway in your community to further reduce pesticide use in residential or business areas? This may include neighborhood-led efforts, outreach to landscapers, etc. If so, please describe.

The Bee City committee actively collaborates with neighborhood associations, businesses, and gardening clubs to

emphasize the importance of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and advocate for the least toxic methods of pest control. Their outreach efforts focus on key IPM principles, such as accurately diagnosing problems before considering treatment, using the least toxic solutions for landscape issues, and avoiding pesticide or fertilizer applications before rain. They also stress the importance of preserving beneficial insects, as 95% of insects are not pests, and encourage using pesticides only as a last resort while always following label instructions. Those who adhere to Grow Green practices are already implementing IPM strategies. In addition to promoting responsible pest management, the Bee City committee advocates for eliminating neonicotinoids and other harmful chemicals while discouraging the use of pre-treated plants. Their presentations highlight the benefits of sourcing organic plants and participating in native plant and seed exchanges. Educational sessions frequently address the systemic dangers of neonicotinoids, which, being water-soluble, can be absorbed by plant roots and make all parts of the plant toxic to pollinators. A key figure in Austin's Bee City certification, local landscape architect Rachel Raise of Raise Design Studio, continues to educate clients on sustainable plant care through her landscape designs for local businesses. Austin Watershed is actively working to reduce pesticide use in residential and business areas through education and outreach, primarily via its Grow Green Program. This initiative promotes sustainable landscaping practices that support water conservation, pollution prevention, and integrated pest management (IPM). By encouraging the use of native and adapted plants, the program helps reduce the need for chemical treatments while fostering healthier ecosystems. Grow Green offers a variety of resources, including a Native & Adapted Plant Guide, fact sheets on pest management, landscape design templates, and drainage solutions. It also provides training for landscape professionals, equipping them with sustainable maintenance techniques. Nearly every nursery and some home improvement stores in Austin distribute Grow Green materials, making this information widely accessible. By providing education and practical tools, the program empowers residents and businesses to make environmentally responsible choices that minimize pesticide use and support pollinator-friendly landscapes.

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

The Austin Climate Equity Plan, adopted by City Council in September 2021, aims to achieve net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, with a strong focus on significant reductions by 2030. As part of this effort, the plan emphasizes enhancing natural systems to sequester an additional 5% of the city's total carbon emissions while expanding green spaces and wildlife habitats. Key goals include protecting 20,000 additional acres of natural lands, conserving 500,000 acres of farmland through legal or regenerative practices, achieving at least 50% tree canopy citywide by 2050 with an emphasis on equity, and ensuring all city-owned lands are managed to minimize carbon emissions while maximizing community benefits. In 2024, the City of Austin worked to establish a Climate Equity and Resilience Framework to simplify and clarify its approach to climate change, ensuring that all aspects of the issue were addressed across the City organization while balancing three key components through the lens of equity: reducing emissions toward net-zero by 2040, increasing resilience to environmental stressors, and maintaining affordability. The framework's Climate Equity Plan – Mitigation section outlined actions to avoid, reduce, or capture greenhouse gas emissions, guided by the Austin Climate Equity Plan adopted by the City Council in 2021. Meanwhile, the Resilience and Climate Adaptation section focused on strengthening the city's ability to prepare for and recover from climate-

related shocks such as extreme heat, drought, flooding, wildfires, and severe winter storms, following the Climate Resilience Plan for City Assets and Operations. The Austin Water Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend plays a key role in educating the community about sustainable environmental practices, including ways to protect pollinators, people, and waterways from pesticides. Through its ongoing partnership with the University of Texas and Texas A&M University, Austin Water supports research on urban ecology and sustainability. The Hornsby Bend Biosolids Management Plant contributes to these efforts by recycling the city's biosolids and yard trimmings, reducing waste, and promoting healthy ecosystems. In 2024, Austin Water hosted virtual "Lunchtime Lectures" covering topics such as pesticide-free land management, pollinator conservation, water quality protection, and sustainable agriculture. These educational sessions provided valuable guidance on reducing harmful chemical use and implementing environmentally friendly landscaping practices to support a healthier Austin.

Did your committee participate in any continuing education on ecologically-based Integrated Pest Management planning?
We provided educational sessions for frontline staff to enhance their understanding of the importance of IPMP and their role in protecting pollinators. Our goal was to explain the reasoning behind these policies, address misconceptions, and encourage informed decision-making that aligns with organizational objectives. Austin Watershed is actively working to reduce pesticide use in residential and business areas through education and outreach, primarily via its Grow Green Program. This initiative promotes sustainable landscaping practices that support water conservation, pollution prevention, and integrated pest management (IPM). By encouraging the use of native and adapted plants, the program helps reduce the need for chemical treatments while fostering healthier ecosystems. Grow Green offers a variety of resources, including a Native & Adapted Plant Guide, fact sheets on pest management, landscape design templates, and drainage solutions. It also provides training for landscape professionals, equipping them with sustainable maintenance techniques. Nearly every nursery and some home improvement stores in Austin distribute Grow Green materials, making this information widely accessible. By providing education and practical tools, the program empowers residents and businesses to make environmentally responsible choices that minimize pesticide use and support pollinator-friendly landscapes.

Committee Photo

Learn More

Integrated Pest Management Plan: [pr-op-om-integrated-pest-management_2025_review.docx](#)

Recommended Native Plant List:

<https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Watershed/growgreen/plantguide.pdf>

Recommended Native Plant Supplier List:



jessica.gilzow@austintexas.gov

