

# Bee City USA - Decatur

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.*

Decatur continues to maintain two plots of land set aside by the city as pollinator habitat. A three-quarters of acre former residential lot, and a quarter-acre former business site downtown. These sites are maintained with the help of Decatur volunteers, city of Decatur public works, DeKalb County Master Gardener Extension volunteers, and other members of the community. They are native plant habitats.

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

2

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

21

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

2

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

43560

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

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



Mason bee species on a dandelion. In 2024, city of Decatur again observed No Mow Month in March, encouraging residents to leave forage for early spring pollinators.



Beecatur chairperson Peter Hefflich awards three members of the Oakhurst Girl Scout Troop 16191 for their year-long service project promoting pollinator conservation.

## Education & Outreach

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

On February 3, Bee City USA-Decatur, GA got the new year off to a rousing start by marching as part of the city's annual Mead Road Mardi Gras Parade. Dressed as bees and butterflies, along the parade route we passed out Bit-o-Honey candy and distributed literature about pollinator-friendly practices. In March, the city marked its second annual No Mow Month, where residents are encouraged to refrain from mowing to help provide forage for early spring pollinators. Free signs were printed and distributed to those who wanted one for their yard. Working with our non-profit fiscal partner, Wyld Center, Beecatur again held our popular Mason Bee House-Building Workshop in March. This year's event was supported by four Girl Scout cadets, members of Oakhurst Troop #16191. These young ladies partnered with Bee City USA-Decatur, GA throughout the entire year as they pursued 50 community service hours each, required as part of their work towards earning their Girl Scouts Silver Award. They chose pollinators as the topic of their community service. For the Mason Bee event, the girls purchased, cut, drilled and sanded all the wood pieces needed to build the houses. They then helped to lead the educational portion of the program and helped younger children assemble and decorate their bee houses. These four hard-working, 13-year old Girl Scouts were very helpful to Beecatur in a variety of ways throughout the year, including working alongside Master Gardener volunteers at our pollinator habitats; tabling at Beecatur events; distributing literature at their cookie sales; assisting during our annual pollinator festival; and even building and donating a beautiful garden bench. School visits are a large part of educational activities. In 2024, we visited schools on seven occasions. In February, we visited high school students at the Galloway School to discuss the importance of pollinator diversity. We also paid a visit to pre-schoolers and early elementary students at the Little Forest Elementary School to talk about Four Spring Bees and Pollinator Power. Spring Bees were

again the topic of a presentation to the four kindergarten classrooms of the city's Oakhurst Elementary in March and the three kindergartens of Glennwood Elementary. We again talked Pollinator Diversity with five second grade classrooms at Drew Charter School. In September, we helped mark Rosh Hashanah by visiting with pre-schoolers at Mitzvah House to talk about how bees make honey. In October, we returned to Gennwood Elementary to speak to their three second grade classrooms about the importance of pollinators. School children, however, were not our only audience for presentations related to bees and pollinators. We also presented a talk called "Meet Your Native Bees" to the Morrow Women's Civic Club, the Fayette County Master Gardener Volunteers, and the Cobb County Master Gardener Volunteers. There were many opportunities for tabling in the community as well. Beecatur volunteers distributed literature and answered questions at multiple events including twice at the Oakhurst Farmers Market; at City of Decatur's annual Earth Day celebration; at Woodlands Garden Spring Plant Sale; at our National Pollinator Week festival; at Beech Hollow Wildflower Farm's Fall Festival; and Wylde Center's Sugar Creek Fall Festival. The highlight of our community outreach every year, is Beecatur's National Pollinator Week Festival on downtown Decatur square. This year's event featured almost 40 environmental themed exhibitor-vendors, in addition to face painters, popsicles, food and drink, and music. Drawing some 300 attendees, we had a beautiful day on the downtown square.

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

20

*How many Bee City USA logo street signs have you installed to date (in total)?*

2



Bee City USA, Decatur, GA marches as part of the annual Mead Road Mardi Gras Parade (Photo: Beecatur)



Thank you notes from kindergartners at Decatur's Westchester Elementary following a presentation about Four Spring Bees.



A beautiful - albeit warm - day for our National Pollinator Week Festival in June (Photo: Beecatur)



Bee City USA sign in Decatur's Harmony Park (Photo Credit: Beecatur)

## Policies & Practices

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

**Our biggest ongoing initiative relates the residential mosquito spraying. We actively encourage city residents to refrain from this harmful practice and print and distribute educational literature related to mosquito spraying; sell yard signs discouraging the practice; and maintain a website of helpful resources and alternatives.**

*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.*

**In February 2025, we will be partnering with Agnes Scott College to present a workshop where members of the community can learn to make their own pollinator-friendly "mosquito buckets of death."**

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

**We expanded our use of signage related to mining bees, which emerge in Georgia in late February through mid-April.**

This effort began in an effort to educate parents and students at Decatur High School, where the grounds near the main front entrance are also home to very large aggregate of mining bees. Signage there prompted many calls from city residents for signs to be placed in additional locations around town where mining bees were observed – along sidewalks, in parks, etc. These signs explain mining bees and provide a QR code link to our website for more information.

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

**No, however in May 2024 we will be co-sponsoring a community round-table panel discussion on IPM.**

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

- Distributed educational materials to residents or students to encourage the reduction or elimination of pesticide use
- Sourced plants for city or campus grounds that were not treated with neonicotinoids
- Encouraged developers and private landscapers to source plants that were not treated with neonicotinoids



In 2024, we expanded our mining bee signage program, placing signs at reported mining bee aggregates on school grounds, city parks and along sidewalks near where bees were observed.

*Any lessons learned you would like to share?*

Partnering with other local groups is definitely important. This year we worked on an ongoing basis with a teen Girl Scout troop. This partnership was very rewarding for all involved. We are also beginning to work more closely with Agnes Scott College, the local bee campus, a relationship which is already proving beneficial.

## Committee Photo



Girl Scout Cadet Troop #16191 seated on the garden bench they built and present in our pollinator habitat, with Beecatur and DeKalb County Master Gardener volunteers. (Photo: Beecatur)

Learn More

Integrated Pest Management Plan:

Recommended Native Plant List: [NATIVE PLANT LISTS \\_ beecatur.pdf](https://www.beecaturga.com/native-plant-lists)

<https://www.beecaturga.com/native-plant-lists>

Recommended Native Plant Supplier List: [NATIVE PLANT GROWERS \\_ beecatur.pdf](https://www.beecaturga.com/native-plant-growers)

<https://www.beecaturga.com/native-plant-growers>

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