Bee City USA - San Francisco

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, San Francisco made significant strides in creating and enhancing pollinator habitat across both urban and natural landscapes. From coastal dunes to inner-city schoolyards, public agencies, nonprofits, and community members united around restoring native ecosystems essential to pollinators like bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. Key habitat installations included dune scrub and native nectar plantings along the Sunset Boulevard Corridor, Laguna Honda Hospital, and Visitacion Valley Greenway. Meanwhile, riparian zones saw active restoration at Lobos Creek and El Polín Spring in the Presidio, which support native bees and migratory monarch butterflies. Notably, a city collaboration of government agencies and nonprofits restored native dune grasses at Ocean Beach, expanding habitat for coastal pollinators. Mount Sutro's Rotary Meadow saw the restoration of 1.5 acres of native habitat through the leadership of Sutro Stewards, who mobilized 446 volunteers and partnered with seven organizations, including UCSF and SF Recreation and Parks. Residential areas also contributed: Friends of the Urban Forest planted sidewalk gardens that double as pollinator corridors, while the Climate Action Now program continued habitat improvements along Sunset Boulevard. Seven citywide projects contributed to habitat expansion through focused restoration of dune scrub ecosystems, which support specialized native bee species. These efforts were implemented by a wide range of land managers—emphasizing the collaborative nature of pollinator restoration across San Francisco: – Pier 94 and Heron's Head Park (SF Port, Golden Gate Bird Alliance) – Attracted Melissodes pallidisignatus, a rare native specialist bee, now one of just four native specialist bee species recorded in San Francisco. – Green Hairstreak Corridor (Nature in the City in partnership with SF Public Works and SF Recreation & Parks Natural Resources Division) – Continues to maintain critical pollinator pathways. – Garfield Elementary School (SF Unified School District) – Installed dune scrub habitat on school grounds, engaging students in ecological stewardship. – Sunset Boulevard Corridor (SF Public Works) – Native planting at key intersections including 36th Ave at Kirkham, Lawton & Santiago, and Taraval. – Dorothy Erskine Park (Friends of Dorothy Erskine Park, SF Rec & Parks NRD) – Local stewardship efforts to restore native pollinator habitat near Glen Canyon. – Potrero Green Benefit District (DPW, Caltrans) – Public agency collaboration for pollinator-supportive urban landscaping. – Oak Woodlands in Golden Gate Park (Friends of Oak Woodlands, SF Rec & Parks) – Community-led planting that contributes to large-scale park biodiversity. Neighborhood-driven efforts by Russian Hill Neighbors further expanded pollinator habitat in small but meaningful urban spaces, demonstrating the role of residents and utility partnerships: – Ina Coolbrith Park (SF Rec & Parks) – Taylor Street between Vallejo and Green (DPW) – Macondray Lane near Green Street (DPW) – Redfield Alley at Taylor near Union (PG&E) These widespread efforts underscore a remarkable citywide model of collaboration—uniting nonprofits, residents, school districts, utilities, and multiple city departments across publicly and privately managed lands. Together, these initiatives restore

ecological function, support pollinator diversity, and build resilient green infrastructure throughout San Francisco's urban fabric. Hummingbird Farm, a 7-acre community-led ecological sanctuary in the Excelsior, significantly expanded its pollinator habitats in 2024. The farm created 14 xinampas—floating gardens inspired by traditional Nahuatl agricultural systems—including 8 in their urban agriculture zones and 6 in riparian areas. These floating gardens serve as perennial refugia and food sources for pollinators, incorporating California native plants, herbs, and food crops in a culturally rooted integrated pest management (IPM) strategy. The xinampas not only provide habitat but also embody cultural restoration, honoring indigenous knowledge and agricultural heritage. Between 2022 and 2024, the farm received three plant kits from the Xerces Society, planting more than 3,600 California natives across their riparian zones and southern slope. Many of these species are now self-sowing and outcompeting invasive plants. In addition, the farm reintroduced 500 native plants into Geneva Meadow—one of San Francisco's last remaining grasslands—using local plant genetics sourced from SF Rec & Park and San Bruno Mountain Watch. These efforts collectively enhance pollinator diversity, restore ecosystem function, and connect fragmented habitats within the urban matrix.

How many habitat projects did you help to create or enhance in 2024?
35

How many people (staff, volunteers, students, partners, etc.) helped with those projects?
300

How many projects benefit monarchs, milkweed, or nectar plantings?
15

How many total square feet of habitat were created or enhanced?
800000

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

CNPS- Yerba Buena Chapter

Education & Outreach

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

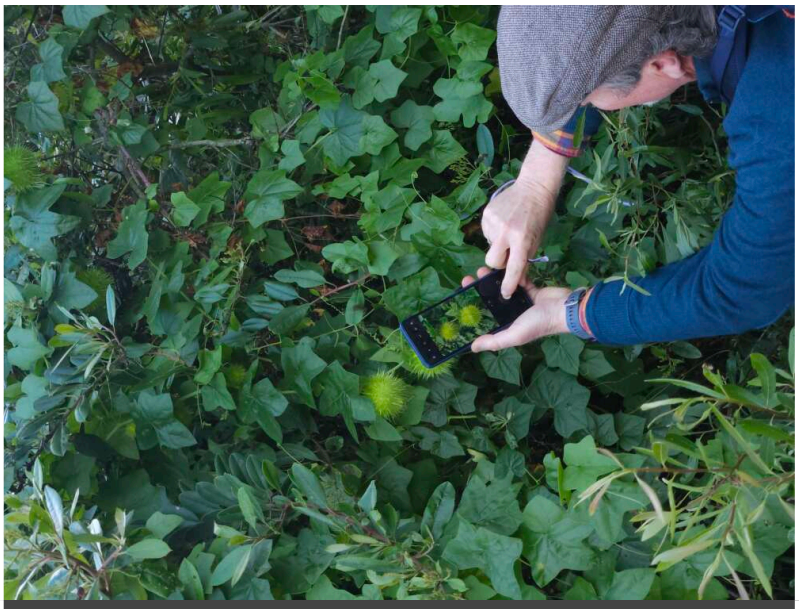
In 2024, San Francisco witnessed a vibrant surge in community-led pollinator conservation and outreach activities, showcasing collaboration between nonprofits, schools, local businesses, and city agencies. A leading contributor was the San Francisco Environment Department (SFE), which compiled this report to highlight the city's ongoing efforts. The California Native Plant Society Yerba Buena Chapter (CNPS-YB) hosted several well-attended educational programs, including "Gardening for Butterflies," which was recorded and viewed by nearly 400 people. CNPS-YB also organized two Bee Gardening events and participated in the Randall Museum's Bug Day, where they distributed new outreach materials focused on native butterfly host plants and pollen-specialist bees. Additionally, free native seeds and pollinator-friendly planting guides were made available at community centers to promote local engagement in pollinator support. San Francisco's native plant nurseries, including Sutro Stewards—a recommended local supplier—played an active role by hosting seed saving and ecological gardening events. Sutro Stewards alone organized 104 restoration and nursery programs, drawing 623 participants. These events served not only to restore habitat but to educate and empower the public in hands-on conservation practices. While this report captures a representative sample of pollinator outreach in the city, it does not encompass every organization contributing to this important work. A standout example of grassroots engagement was Hummingbird Farm, a 7-acre urban sanctuary in the Excelsior neighborhood and a project of PODER's Urban Campesinx program. The farm hosted over 25 community workdays

focused on pollinator habitat restoration throughout the fall and winter. In December, they held a Restoration Mixer, a collaborative event that brought together community members, volunteers, and organizations to celebrate ecological stewardship across San Francisco. The farm also welcomed over a dozen school groups in 2024, offering youth-led habitat walks and pollinator education that integrated art, science, and movement-based learning. One of the most innovative events of the year was the farm's first-ever lunar planting, organized by two youth stewards in October. The event aimed to support nocturnal pollinators and engaged 32 participants who planted 20 one-gallon pots to expand pollinator habitat.

How many pollinator-related events or outreach activities did you host or help with in 2024 (in total)?
30

How many people attended those events (in total)?
6500

SFE outreach


citizen science and educational bioblitz outreach

Policies & Practices

Please describe actions taken to make pest management more pollinator-friendly.
Pollinator-friendly pest management has become standard practice across San Francisco, particularly on public lands and in community gardens. The Recreation and Parks Department (RPD) adheres to the city's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) guidelines, which emphasize organic and ecological techniques. RPD-led public workshops—such as those on fruit tree pruning—educate residents on prevention-first pest control, ecological sanitation, and

sustainable gardening practices. Restoration sites consistently avoid synthetic chemicals, instead relying on manual and biological methods. Educational materials distributed by the San Francisco Environment Department (SFE) and its partners promote native planting as a strategy to reduce pest pressure naturally. Restoration nurseries across the city, including Sutro Stewards, employ 100% organic IPM methods aligned with UC Davis' AIR (Avoiding Introduction and Release) program for Phytophthora prevention. These practices include careful water management, pest scouting, hand removal, sanitation protocols, and Phytophthora testing for all plants before outplanting—ensuring both pollinator health and ecological integrity. At Hummingbird Farm, xinampas—floating gardens inspired by traditional Nahua agriculture—serve as both pollinator habitat and a key component of the farm's IPM strategy. These gardens provide refuge and food sources not only for pollinators but also for beneficial parasitoid insects, reinforcing a holistic, habitat-based approach to ecological pest management.

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.

Throughout 2024, outreach and education campaigns worked to reduce pesticide use in residential and commercial settings. Many efforts focused on promoting native plant landscaping and chemical-free pest management. Targeted outreach encouraged homeowners and landscapers to embrace ecological gardening and plant resilience strategies. San Francisco's Green Business Program continued to incentivize businesses to adopt IPM protocols and reduce pesticide use. The Bee-Friendly Nursery Campaign, led by SFE, engaged nurseries to pledge against systemic pesticides and invasive plants and to sell only local native species. These nurseries are promoted to the public as trusted, pollinator-safe sources.

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

San Francisco is advancing pesticide reduction through strengthened landscape policies and cross-agency collaboration. Departments such as Recreation and Parks, Public Works, SFE, and the Presidio Trust advocate for reduced pesticide use on public lands. Expanded sidewalk and rain garden initiatives are transforming paved spaces into biodiverse habitats that absorb stormwater and reduce chemical runoff—benefiting both pollinators and water quality. A citywide coalition called Reimagine SF exemplifies how collaborative leadership can create significant environmental change. This coalition—composed of community groups, city agencies, nonprofits, and educational institutions—aims to make 30% of San Francisco biodiverse green space by 2030. Their goals include creating a connected network of wildlife corridors, fully resourced land stewardship, universal access to nearby nature, and routine integration of biodiverse landscapes into the built environment. Organized by the California Academy of Sciences, Reimagine SF is a powerful example of how cities can catalyze long-term transformation in support of pollinators, people, and healthy ecosystems. Ultimately, this approach reduces the need for pesticides, as complex, biodiverse systems allow for natural pest regulation by the ecosystems themselves.

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

Yes. Continuing education is central to San Francisco's approach to pollinator conservation and Integrated Pest

Management (IPM). Bee and Butterfly Gardening workshops incorporated IPM principles, equipping residents with science-based tools for sustainable pest management. Across the city, webinars and in-person trainings focused on pollinator-friendly land care provided accessible education for gardeners, land stewards, and the general public. Sutro Stewards participated in advanced IPM education through the California Native Nursery Network Working Group, attending sessions hosted by the UCSC Arboretum, UC Davis, and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. These sessions emphasized Phytophthora prevention and organic nursery management—critical components of safe, pollinator-supportive restoration practices. Additionally, monthly IPM webinars and environmental education programs offered through the San Francisco Public Library system delivered science-based learning on composting, gardening, and ecological pest control to community members of all ages. In 2024, Hummingbird farm also hosted over a dozen school groups, educating local youth on the importance of pollinator habitat. Students ranged from elementary to high school, and each visit included guided habitat walks where they interacted with a variety of California native and non-native plants supporting our farm's pollinator populations. Depending on the age group, students reflected on their pollinator learning through art, science, or movement-based activities.

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

- Implemented or maintained a written IPM plan
- Only use pesticides as a last resort within the IPM plan
- Avoided use of pesticides in public sites containing designated pollinator habitat or other sensitive features (except when targeted use is deemed the best option for invasive or noxious weed, insect or disease management)
- Implemented non-chemical pest prevention and management methods on city or campus grounds
- Reduced the total area of city or campus-managed lands to which pesticides are applied
- Eliminated use of neonicotinoid insecticides on city or campus grounds
- Distributed educational materials to residents or students to encourage the reduction or elimination of pesticide use
- Sourced plants for city or campus grounds using "Buying Bee-Safe Plants" methods recommended by Xerces Society. (See https://xerces.org/publications/fact-sheets/buying-bee-safe-plants)
- Sourced plants for city or campus grounds that were not treated with neonicotinoids
- Encouraged developers and private landscapers to source plants using "Buying Bee-Safe Plants" methods recommended by Xerces Society. (See https://xerces.org/publications/fact-sheets/buying-bee-safe-plants)

Committee Photo

Learn More

Integrated Pest Management Plan:
https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/san_francisco/latest/sf_environment/0-0-0-160
Recommended Native Plant List:
https://sfplanninggis.org/plantsf/
Recommended Native Plant Supplier List:
https://www.sfenvironment.org/bee-friendly-plant-nurseries

https://www.sfenvironment.org/biodiversity

https://www.instagram.com/sfenvironment?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet&igsh=ZDNlZDc0MzIxNw==

BEE CITY USA®
AN INITIATIVE OF THE XERCES SOCIETY

XERCES SOCIETY
for Invertebrate Conservation