

# Bee City USA - Whiteville

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.*

**A Sanctuary of Growth:** The Columbus County Hospital Pollinator and Vegetable Garden Hospitals, by their very nature, are places of intense emotion. They are where we confront vulnerability, celebrate resilience, and often grapple with uncertainty. Amidst the sterile environment and the often-anxious atmosphere, a breath of fresh air, a moment of tranquility, can be profoundly restorative. Recognizing this need, our club created and currently maintains a pollinator and vegetable garden adjacent to Columbus County Hospital, a sanctuary designed to offer solace and rejuvenation to patients, families, and staff alike. This garden is more than just a collection of plants; it is a carefully cultivated space intended to nurture both the environment and the human spirit. We have intentionally incorporated a variety of elements to achieve this dual purpose. The vibrant vegetable beds, bursting with seasonal produce, offer a tangible connection to the earth and the cycle of life. The grape vines, promising future harvests, symbolize hope and the enduring nature of growth. Interspersed among these productive plants are pollinator-friendly species, carefully selected to attract bees, butterflies, and other vital creatures. These vibrant flowers not only add beauty to the garden but also play a critical role in supporting the local ecosystem. The gentle hum of bees and the fluttering of butterflies create a calming ambiance, a stark contrast to the often-sterile environment within the hospital walls. The garden is designed to be a place of quiet reflection. Whether someone is facing a difficult diagnosis, supporting a loved one through treatment, or simply needs a moment away from the intensity of the hospital environment, the garden offers a refuge. The rustling leaves, the fragrant blossoms, and the gentle breeze create a sensory experience that can help to ground individuals in the present moment, offering a respite from their worries. It is a place where one can find a quiet corner to contemplate, to pray, or simply to breathe. Recognizing the power of art to heal and inspire, we have also incorporated local artwork throughout the garden. These pieces, thoughtfully chosen, add another layer of depth and meaning to the space. They offer visual stimulation and encourage contemplation, inviting visitors to connect with their own emotions and experiences in new ways. The art serves as a reminder that even in the midst of suffering, beauty and creativity can flourish. Looking to the future, we are excited to expand the garden's offerings with the addition of a large pergola this year. This structure will provide much-needed shade during the warmer months, creating an even more comfortable and inviting space for visitors. It will also serve as a focal point for gatherings and events, further strengthening the sense of community that the garden fosters. The Columbus County Hospital pollinator and vegetable garden is a testament to the power of nature to heal and restore. It is a place where growth, both natural and personal, is nurtured. It is a sanctuary, a refuge, and a reminder that even in the most challenging of circumstances, hope can blossom and beauty can thrive. We believe that this garden is a vital asset to our community, offering a tangible expression of our commitment to the well-being of all those who pass through the doors of Columbus County

## Hospital.

*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?*

25

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

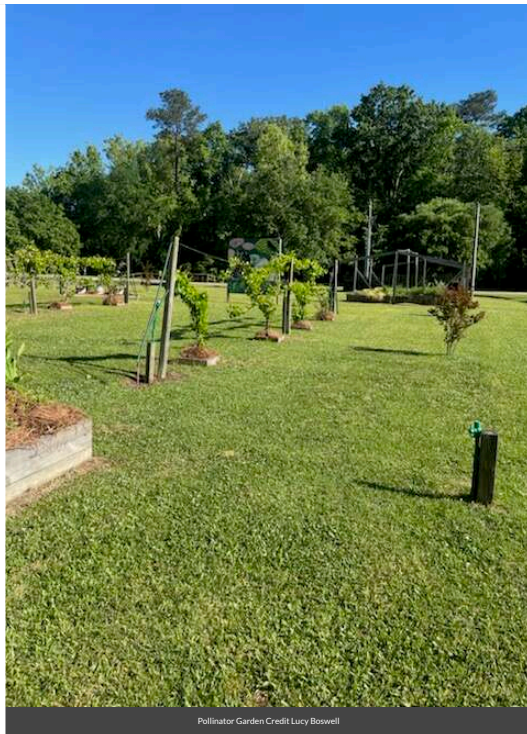
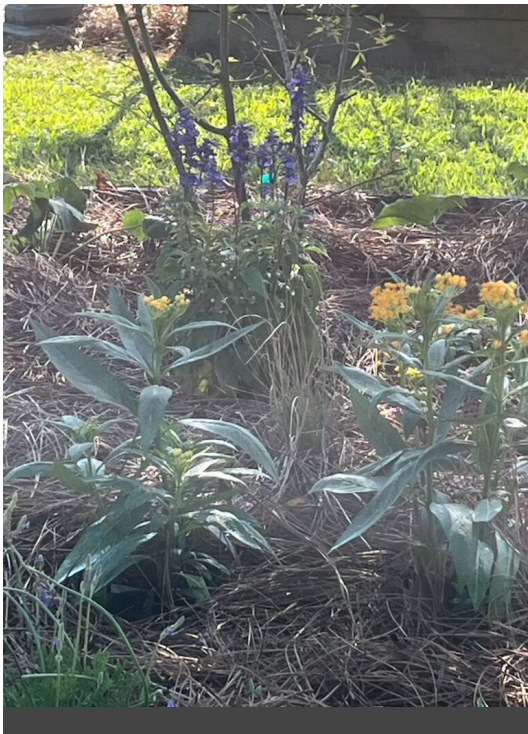
2

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

800

*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
- Herb garden
- Native milkweed planting for monarchs and bees (where appropriate)



Pollinator Garden Credit Lucy Boswell

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## Education & Outreach

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

**Buzzing with Activity:** The Columbus County Beekeepers' Commitment to Pollinator Education The hum of a beehive is a sound often taken for granted, yet it represents a vital process underpinning our very ecosystem: pollination. In Columbus County, the local beekeepers' association is working tirelessly to raise awareness about the crucial role of pollinators, particularly bees, through a diverse and engaging series of events throughout the year. Their efforts not only educate the community but also foster a deeper appreciation for these essential creatures. The beekeepers' outreach begins with the foundational "Bee School," designed to equip aspiring apiarists with the knowledge and skills necessary to become successful beekeepers. This introductory program serves as a gateway into the fascinating world of bees, emphasizing the importance of native bee populations and their contribution to local biodiversity. By empowering individuals to become stewards of their own hives, the association cultivates a growing network of bee advocates within the community. Beyond Bee School, the Columbus County beekeepers maintain a visible presence at several key community events. At "Southern Farm Days," an observation hive becomes a focal point, drawing crowds and sparking conversations about bees and the intricate process of pollination. Volunteers are on hand to answer questions and share their expertise, bridging the gap between the public and the often-misunderstood world of bees. This interactive approach continues at Jones Lake State Park, where middle school students from around Clarkton experience the wonder of a live beehive firsthand. Over a three-day period, approximately four schools participate in

this immersive educational opportunity, learning about the crucial connection between bees and the food we eat. The association's commitment to education extends to older students as well. At Southeastern Community College's Earth Day celebration, volunteers again utilize an observation hive to engage middle and high school students in discussions about pollination and its significance for the environment. This targeted outreach ensures that younger generations understand the importance of protecting pollinators for the future. The fall season brings a flurry of activity, starting with the bustling NC Honey Festival in downtown Whiteville. This large-scale event attracts thousands of visitors, providing a platform for the beekeepers to connect with the community, share their passion for bees, and promote the benefits of local honey. The following week, "Honey Day" at the local farmers market offers a more intimate setting for similar interactions. This year, the association is adding a touch of whimsy to their outreach with a "Paw-linator Parade," encouraging residents to dress their pets as bees and participate in a parade through the local park. This fun and engaging event promises to draw attention to the importance of pollinators in a lighthearted and memorable way. Finally, the Columbus County Fair provides another opportunity for the beekeepers to showcase their work. Their educational booth, often adorned with blue ribbons for its informative and engaging displays, highlights the intricacies of honeybee life and the association's ongoing commitment to community education. Through this diverse range of events, the Columbus County beekeepers are not just promoting their hobby; they are actively cultivating a community that understands and values the essential role of pollinators. Their dedication to education and outreach is ensuring that the buzz about bees in Columbus County will continue for generations to come.

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

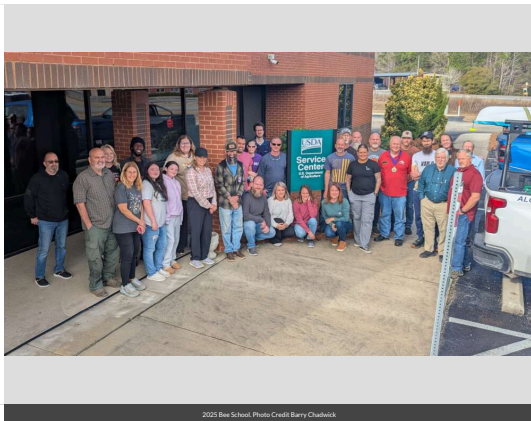
10

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

9000

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

4





## Policies & Practices

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

**A Buzzworthy Partnership: Protecting Pollinators During Mosquito Control in Columbus County** The aftermath of a natural disaster often brings a surge in mosquito populations, creating a public health concern that demands swift action. However, the methods used to control these mosquito populations can have unintended consequences, particularly for vital pollinators like bees. This year, Columbus County took a proactive approach to this challenge, forging a unique partnership between the Columbus County Beekeepers and the county Mosquito Spraying Program. This collaboration, driven by a shared commitment to both public health and environmental stewardship, offers a promising model for other communities. Recent experiences in neighboring counties served as a cautionary tale. Aerial spraying, while effective in reducing mosquito numbers, resulted in significant losses of pollinators. These incidents highlighted the urgent need for a more nuanced approach, one that balances the need for mosquito control with the protection of these essential creatures. In Columbus County, this realization spurred a collaborative effort spearheaded by the County Manager, the head of the Columbus County Health Department, and the head of Facility Services. These key figures recognized the importance of engaging local beekeepers in the process, understanding that their expertise and on-the-ground knowledge could be invaluable. The resulting partnership is built on two key pillars: utilizing the Driftwatch website and actively participating in the BeeCheck program. Driftwatch, a powerful online tool, allows applicators to identify the locations of sensitive areas, including apiaries, crops, and other sites where pesticide drift could cause harm. By consulting Driftwatch before spraying, the county can minimize the potential for unintended exposure to pollinators. Complementing this, the Columbus County Beekeepers are actively participating in the BeeCheck website. This platform allows beekeepers to register the locations of their hives, providing real-time information to applicators and further enhancing the precision of mosquito control efforts. This collaborative approach represents a significant step forward in responsible mosquito management. By combining the resources and expertise of county officials and local beekeepers, Columbus County is demonstrating a commitment to both public health and environmental sustainability. The partnership acknowledges the crucial role that pollinators play in our ecosystem and economy, while also addressing the legitimate concerns surrounding mosquito-borne illnesses. This “buzzworthy” partnership offers a valuable lesson: open communication, proactive planning, and the use of technology can pave the way for effective and environmentally sound mosquito control strategies. It is a model that other communities should consider as they grapple with the complex challenges of balancing public health needs with the protection of our precious pollinator populations.

*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.*

Our local farmers' market often helps spread awareness on the benefits of reducing pesticide use and using alternative solutions.



February 2025 Beekeeping meeting credit Sandra Clemmons

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Committee Photo

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Learn More

**Integrated Pest Management Plan:**

**Recommended Native Plant List:**

<https://ncwildflower.org/recommended-native-species/>

**Recommended Native Plant Supplier List:** [Native North Carolina Nurseries - Coastal.pdf](#)

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1kYC76c2gs-qWj6ke4gVbQ-ktbtQ-oY6HKlqc4ZP0oBo/edit?usp=sharing>

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