

Bee City USA – Hillsboro

Report on 2019 & 2020

In June 2019, Hillsboro became a Bee City USA affiliate, joining more than a hundred other cities and campuses across the country united in improving their landscapes for pollinators.

Thinking globally and acting locally, Bee City USA is in initiative of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation that provides a framework for communities to come together to conserve native pollinators by providing them with healthy habitat that is rich in a variety of native plants, provides nest sites, and is protected from pesticides.



Photo: Hillsboro City Council and the Community Experts & Advocates Group celebrate the adoption of the Bee City USA affiliate resolution.

As a Bee City USA affiliate, Hillsboro has acknowledged that bees and other pollinators are a vital part of the ecosystem, supporting and encouraging healthy pollinator populations through the following efforts between June 2019 and December 2020:

Pollinator Habitat Creation & Enhancement

- Parks Maintenance staff piloted its first pollinator habitat project at Francis Street Park. A 1,500 square foot planting area was reseeded with wildflowers and vegetation that will support pollinators and reduce maintenance overhead.
- Restoration efforts throughout Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve included the placement of over 200 logs and root wads for wildlife. Planting goals are also focused on improving the understory plant community for pollinators. Ongoing maintenance efforts focus on the regular removal of invasive species to encourage native vegetation to establish.



Photo: Root wads from Jackson School Road project placed in Wapato Marsh at Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve.

- As part of a Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District TREE Grant, over 100 native western crabapple trees were planted to improve pollinator habitat by providing food and connectivity throughout Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve. One of the restoration goals is to expand the population of native orchard mason bees, which will visit these flowering trees and the wildflowers seeded in open areas during the spring.



Photo: Pollinator habitat enhancement projects in full bloom at Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve.

- All four of the Friends of Trees community volunteer habitat and enhancement events were focused on planting native plants, including trees, shrubs, and herbaceous vegetation throughout Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve to improve wildlife and pollinator habitat. The majority of 5,000 plants installed bloom throughout the year, providing a food source for pollinators. Specific plants like western crabapple, big leaf maple, and chokecherry were selected due to their value for pollinators.



Photo: Volunteers with Friends of Trees plant natives at Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve.

- The Leadership Hillsboro group and Hillsboro Rotary Youth wrapped up the fall 2020 restoration season with a final planting event in Pintail Pond on Halloween.



Photos: Hillsboro Rotary leaders (left) and youth (right) help planting native plants during a fall 2020 community stewardship event in Pintail Pond at Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve.

- The committee led two different events:
 - The Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District provided TWIG grant funds to advance the pollinator education and conservation goals of a local Girl Scout initiative located at the Orenco Community Garden. The three expressed goals were: to develop an appropriate pollinator habitat, to promote pollinator awareness and conservation, and to successfully raise mason bees.

Ron Spental, a Washington County Master Gardener, and local bee expert, was an integral part of the project which included purchasing and planting pollinator friendly landscaping throughout the garden. A kiosk was installed at the garden site, allowing for the dissemination and display of pollinator education and conservation materials for all ages and abilities. The kiosk also contains two large observational mason bee nesting boxes.

- The Youth Advisory Council selected pollinator enhancement as one of their community project priorities and led the charge by planting over 3,000 native camas bulbs in the Jackson Bottom Wetlands Pollinator Garden.



Photos: The Hillsboro Youth Advisory Council gathers with community volunteers to plant native camas bulbs in a pollinator garden at Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve.

Education & Outreach

- In June 2019, Hillsboro hosted our first ever annual Bee City Celebration. Held at the Nature Center at Jackson Bottom Wetlands, a 635-acre wildlife preserve within our city limits, the Pollinator Palooza provided over 200 attendees a mix of pollinator education and outreach activities supported by pollinator partners, including honey tasting, tours of our pollinator garden, and local vendors selling pollinator-friendly plants.



Photos: Little boy plays with a bee toy and flower. Mother and child wearing crafted bee antenna prepare to have their faces painted to match.



Photos: Community members enjoy Hillsboro's 2019 Pollinator Palooza event at Jackson Bottom Wetlands Nature Center.

- Examples of additional events supporting pollinators held in 2019 include:
 - The Hillsboro Bee City Community Experts & Advocates group met regularly and assisted with community education and outreach by tabling at Celebrate Hillsboro as well as Tuesday and Saturday Markets, engaging over 250 people total.
 - Ron Spental, a Washington County Master Gardener and local bee expert, led a series of pollinator focused workshops that engaged a total of 75 participants. Ron also provided hands-on learning and tools to community members that increased mason bee nests and populations in Hillsboro.
 - Due to pandemic limitations in 2020, our annual Pollinator Palooza event took flight virtually during National Pollinator Week and offered a full week of family friendly activities and resources. Analytics show 1,145 views of the 10 YouTube videos and 9,717 people were reached via the 14 Facebook posts leading to 104 engagements.



Graphic: Hillsboro’s 2020 Pollinator Palooza virtual event flyer.

- Examples of additional events supporting pollinators held in 2020 include:
 - The Hillsboro Public Library provided daily pollinator themed crafts and activities during National Pollinator Week, including a Book Babies story time video.
 - Hillsboro took steps towards reducing hazards and helping pollinators thrive by supporting the Backyard Habitat Certification Program (BHCP), operated by the Portland Audubon Society and Columbia Land Trust. BHCP is a region-wide program providing incentives for community members who seek to restore native habitat to their yards, making their outdoor spaces welcoming for birds, butterflies, and other pollinators. The demonstration garden in front of the Jackson Bottom Nature Center was certified as a platinum habitat by the BHCP team and will serve as a space to inspire Hillsboro residents to participate in the program. Hillsboro entered into a formal agreement with dedicated funding to expand the BHCP in Hillsboro, and a lengthy waitlist of eager homeowners began receiving backyard habitat assessments starting in summer 2020.



Photo: Jessica Dorsey, Senior Program Manager with Hillsboro Water Department, displays the Certified Backyard Habitat sign in the Water Wise Garden with Laura Trunk, Restoration Biologist with Hillsboro Parks & Recreation. The Water Wise Garden was the first site certified as a Backyard Habitat in Hillsboro, and at the highest level achievable -- platinum.

- Seven local high school volunteers enjoyed the WILD (Wetlands Individual Leadership Development) Stewardship Camp in August. Camp experiences included stewardship projects at two different parks, sweep net sampling, and interaction with a demonstration hive.
- Volunteers and staff handed out over 150 pollinator friendly native trees and flowering shrubs during the Arbor Day sapling giveaway in October. This effort helped support our City Council 2020 priority to ‘...provide Hillsboro residents with trees or saplings in celebration of Arbor Day.’
- City staff posted “Leave the Leaves” signs near naturally mulched flower beds and compendium messaging to the community through social and print media to educate the community about ways they can support healthy pollinator habitat.

Policies & Practices

- The City of Hillsboro Parks & Recreation Department recognizes the importance of sound environmental stewardship and is committed to optimizing its parks and recreation management practice to protect the environment within and surrounding the parks. The basis is the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan that utilizes cultural, mechanical, and biological practices prior to the use of pesticides. Striving for continual improvement, the City hired a post-graduate Fellow in the summer of 2020 to review the City’s IPM Plan and to research best practices to inform a Plan update. This work will inform a new IPM policy proposal in 2021.
- In 2020, the City’s responsible Bee City oversight committee, the Hillsboro Sustainability Task Force, was revamped and replaced by the Hillsboro Environmental Stewardship Committee (HESC). In February 2021, the Hillsboro Bee City USA resolution was modified and approved by City Council to name the HESC as our Bee City USA committee. The HESC includes a dedicated Bee City representative. With this effort,

our community-wide stewardship goals and indicators are under review and update, including those tracking the health of our natural resources. New indicators that will be tracked annually include the number of native plant species installed, acres of turf or other areas converted to pollinator-friendly vegetation, and the number of backyard habitat certifications in Hillsboro.



Photo: Sixteen members from the Hillsboro Environmental Stewardship Committee, which is comprised of passionate, diverse community members, listen to a report on pollinator efforts across the City of Hillsboro.



Photo: Hillsboro installs the first Bee City USA sign.

- Integrated Pest Management Plan:
<https://www.cleanwaterservices.org/media/1289/integrated-pest-management-plan.pdf>
- Recommended Native Plant List:
<https://www.oregonmetro.gov/sites/default/files/2018/01/24/native-plants-willamette-valley-yards-booklet.pdf>

- Recommended Native Plant Supplier List:
https://www.plantnative.org/nd_or.htm

Learn More

- <https://www.hillsboro-oregon.gov/our-city/hillsboro-major-projects/bee-city-usa>

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