



# Bee City USA Annual Report Pollinator Conservation & Education 2019



## Decatur, Georgia

### EDUCATION & OUTREACH



Kids hard at work assembling simple Mason Bee houses during our annual workshop in February.



Decatur's Earth Day observance was the perfect time to get city residents excited about bees.



We distributed 500 flyers about the environmental hazards posed by backyard mosquito spraying during Decatur's Haints & Saints Halloween Parade, the perfect platform for our theme "Don't Turn Your Backyard Into A Graveyard."



National Pollinator Week kicked-off in Decatur with our first-ever mini Pollinator Week festival! More than 200 people attended and learned about native plants, trees, pollinators and more courtesy of 13 environmental group vendors.



The annual Mead Road Mardi Gras Parade gave us an opportunity to distribute 500 flyers about bee-friendly yard practices to parade watchers. Our Krewe's theme this year was "Stayin' Alive!"

## City & Community Events

- “Backyard Builders: Make a Home for Mason Bees!” was the title of our annual children’s Mason Bee Workshop presented in conjunction with Wylde Center in February. Thirty-two participants were introduced to the Mason Bee, one of metro Atlanta’s most important early-Spring pollinators. Covered were topics like how to spot them, where they live, their unique life-cycle and how they are similar to and different from other bees. Participants then assembled and decorated a simple Mason Bee house to hang in their yards at home.
- In February, we marched for a second year the Mead Road Mardi Gras parade, using it as a platform for distributing 500 pieces of literature about bee-friendly yard practices directly to residents. Our theme this year was "Stayin' Alive!"
- In February, we again participated in the city’s annual celebration of Georgia Arbor Day. We showed off a colony of honey bees in an observation hive to the great interest of many passers-by and distributed literature about native bees and bee-friendly yard practices.
- The City of Decatur Employee Wellness Breakfast in March provided an opportunity for us to share local honey over a healthy morning meal and discuss how honey bees produce this sweet superfood.
- We again brought an observation hive of bees and answered bee-related questions during Decatur’s Earth Day Celebration at Decatur Rec Center in April.
- Decatur’s first ever National Pollinator Week Mini Festival was held on June 15th, kicking off the week-long annual celebration. Thirteen vendors representing a variety of environmental interests participated. More than 200 people attended the event learning about everything from native plants, to native bees, honey bees, honey production, birds, trees, seeds, crafts, facepainting and more!
- Other National Pollinator Week events included screenings of the films “Hometown Habitat: Stories of Bringing Nature Home” and DisneyNature’s “Wings of Life,” as well as the kids’ talk “Marvel-ous Bees: Superheroes of the Natural World.”
- In August, citizen scientists from across our state helped document pollinators during the Great Georgia Pollinator Census! As part of the event, organized by UGA’s Cooperative Extension Office, Beecatur hosted counting locations at Wylde Center and the Willow Lane Pollinator Habitat. Statewide, 4,567 counts were submitted from 133 different Georgia counties, tallying some 133,963 insect visits!
- In October, we marched in Decatur’s Haints & Saints Halloween parade, using it as a platform for distributing literature about bee-friendly yard practices. Our theme was "Don't Turn Your Backyard Into A Graveyard."
- The 3rd Annual “Walking Past The Dead” Tour of Trees in Decatur Cemetery in November gave us a final opportunity to table with literature and Pollinator Pledge signs and information.

Other programming presented to community groups in and around Decatur during 2019 included:

- “Bee-Yond Honey Bees: Meet Your Native Bees,” at Avon Garden Club (Avondale, GA)
- “3 Spring Bees” at Little Forest Pre-School (Decatur, GA)
- “Pollinator Power!” at The Museum School, 6th Grade Environmental Education class (Avondale)
- “Pollinator Power!” at Oak Grove Elementary, pre-K classes (DeKalb County)
- “Bee-Yond Honey Bees: Meet Your Native Bees” at Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, Dekalb County Women Educators’ Honor Society

## Educational School Presentations

At the heart of Beecatur’s ongoing educational initiatives is programming related to bees and other pollinators presented to school-aged children. In March, we produced and presented a program called “What If There Were No Pollinators?” for second graders at Oakhurst Elementary. During Renfro Middle School’s 7th Grade Spring Science Day in April, our program “Collaboration Means Working Together” looked at how honey bees maximize their abilities through teamwork. In May, we visited Westchester Elementary twice, talking about “Pollinator Power!” with the Kindergarten and 1st grade

classes there. “The Importance of Bees to our Ecosystem” was the topic discussed with 4th graders at F.Ave and, later in the year, 2nd graders at Glennwood. In October, we spoke with F.Ave’s Lego Robotics Team to help them develop a team project related to bees and focused on creating more sustainable cities in the future. The superhero-themed talk “Marvel-ous Bees: Superheroes of the Natural World” was presented to 7th graders during Renfroe Middle School’s Fall Science Day in November. More than 600 students participated in these presentations.

## POLLINATOR HEALTH & HABITAT



In 2019, we broke ground on a new pollinator garden on city property outside the entrance to the city’s historic cemetery.



Proudly displaying our new Xerces Society Pollinator Habitat sign!



This black leafcutter bee seen at our Willow Lane habitat is a carpenter bee mimic.



Many of the plants installed this year were acquired with funds raised through our new Gifts That Grow giving program.



A new bed of native plants going in at Willow Lane.

The city’s first set aside pollinator habitat (115 Willow Lane) has continued to flourish. Multiple work days were held at the site during 2019, including installation of new native plants purchased with funds from our Gifts That Grow donation program. A monthly “Wine & Weeding” program was begun to

encourage volunteer participation in maintenance chores. Through the efforts of our pollinator habitat chairperson, a number of DeKalb County Extension Master Gardeners have filled regular volunteer slots working at the site. A wonderful addition to the space, a Decatur resident built a beautiful arbor entrance as well. In April, Beecatur broke ground on a second habitat site, installing 60 native, flowering plants at 811 Bell Street near the entrance to historic Decatur Cemetery.

### Backyard Mosquito Spraying & Bee Health Advocacy

Non-targeted, broad-spectrum insecticides like those used in residential mosquito control are deadly to almost all insect life and harmful to the larger ecosystem. Via a comprehensive position paper, a social media campaign, an editorial published at local news blog Decaturish.com, and a television interview with Fox5's Kaitlyn Pratt, Beecatur worked hard in 2019 to spread the simple message: "Backyard Mosquito Spraying Kills Bees." Chairperson Peter Helfrich was also interviewed about bees by WABE radio's Molly Samuel and by the Decatur High School newspaper, as well as an hour-long interview by Mike Johnson on DecaturFM.

### Decatur's Pollinator Pledge

A new initiative for 2019, Decatur's Pollinator Pledge program encourages residents to help support pollinators in urban settings like Decatur by committing to learn about and include more native plants in their landscaping; avoiding plants that have been treated with neonicotinoids; reducing or eliminating home insecticide and herbicide use; and foregoing mosquito spraying/misting in their backyards. Homeowners can also elect to purchase a handsome sign to tell their neighbors they're doing their part! Revenue generated helps support Beecatur's work throughout Decatur.

## POLICIES & PRACTICES



Chairperson Peter Helfrich was interviewed about alternatives to backyard mosquito spraying by Atlanta's Fox5 affiliate.



Mosquito spraying was one of many topics touched on during an hour-long interview on DecaturFM.

Backyard mosquito spraying by residents is a particular concern in Decatur. To deter this practice, we suggest residents implement a number of IPM practices first, including personal protection (use of skin-base repellents, long sleeves/pants, air circulation, avoiding outside activities during peak mosquito hours, etc.) and making practical changes like removing sources of standing water, clearing overgrown invasives that harbor mosquitoes, etc. We also stress the use of targeted, biological control methods like BTi (larvicide). In 2019, we put together an official position paper opposing backyard

mosquito spraying that we presented to the Decatur City Commission and the city's Environmental Sustainability Board. This information was further conveyed to the public by a number of means including social media, television/radio/newspaper interviews literature distribution at events, email newsletter, flyer hand-outs, etc.

**Recommended Locally Native Plant Species List** — <https://www.beecaturga.com/native-plant-lists>

**Regional Native Plant Supplier List** — <https://www.beecaturga.com/native-plant-growers>

**Pollinator Friendly Integrated Pest Management Plan** — Under development

## CONTACT US!



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**Social Media** — <https://www.facebook.com/BeeCityUSADecaturGA>

Members of Bee City USA-Decatur, GA and Bee Campus USA-Agnes Scott College march in the annual Haints & Saints Halloween parade.