

GCV Pollinator Resolution and Bee City USA

The GCV Pollinator Resolution Adopted July 2019

[Click Here to Read Resolution](#)

My name is Heidi James. I am in the Lynchburg Garden Club and a member of the newly formed Blue Ridge Conservation. Jean Gilpin asked me to tell you a little bit about what Lynchburg has been doing as it relates to the new GCV Pollinator Resolution, which the board just passed in July 2019.

The new pollinator resolution has all of the usual suggestions for our clubs and members: Plant native plants, plant pollinator-friendly gardens, reduce the use of pesticides/herbicides/fungicides, etc.

But, there is much more to it than that, which I will tell you about today. In Lynchburg, we have happened upon an amazing and highly effective strategy to help pollinators, promote native plants, and reduce chemical use that actually enlists our city to “buy into” these ideas and use their own resources to do it!

GCV 2018 Conservation Forum



It all started last year at the 2018 GCV Conservation Forum in Charlottesville. The chairmen of the conservation committees from our two local clubs, the Lynchburg Garden Club and Hillside Garden Club were in attendance. Their names are Joy Hilliard and Judy Frantz. Here they are:

Joy Hilliard, Lynchburg Garden Club
Judy Frantz, Hillside Garden Club

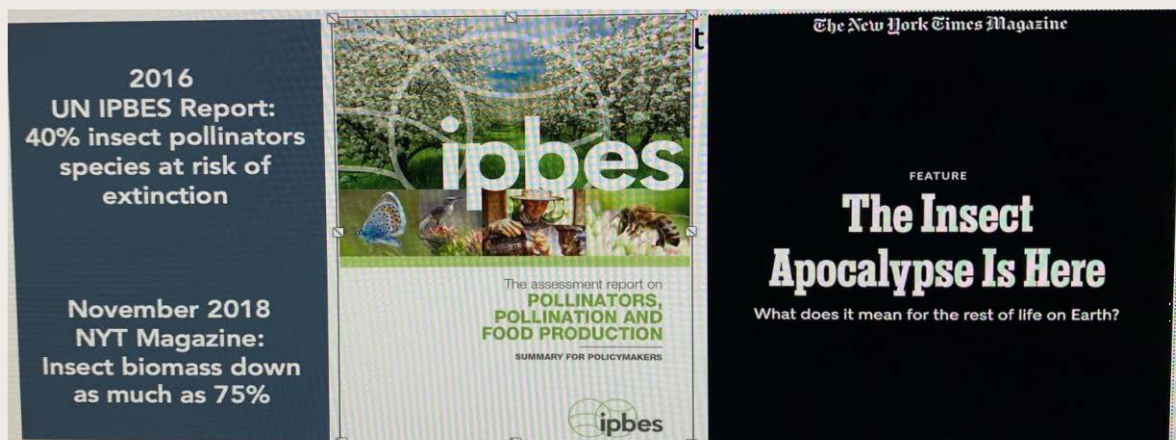


They listened to the talks that day and they were so alarmed that on the way home, they decided to form a partnership between the two Lynchburg clubs to address conservation issues. There are currently 5 members from each club participating and the new partnership is called Blue Ridge Conservation. We even have a logo, seen here.



The first project our group has decided to focus on is helping local pollinators. I know I am preaching to the choir, here, so I'm not going to tell you all about the plight of the pollinators. Many of your clubs already have successful pollinator protection projects in place. So, these slides from the Xerces Society sum it up quickly:

The World is Seeing Insect Pollinators and Insect Biomass Decline



The world is seeing a disturbing decline in insect pollinators and insect biomass.

Pollinators and insects hold the planet together



Photos L to R: Whole Foods, Wikimedia Commons, Wikimedia Commons, Kim Bailey

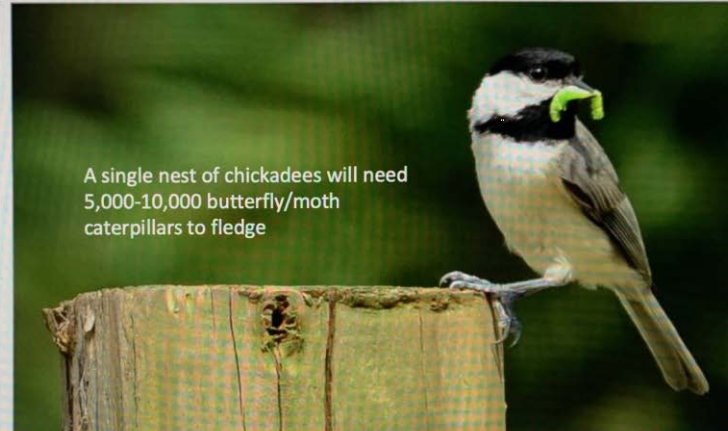
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Pollinators and insects hold the planet together, impacting our ability to grow crops for food.


Pollinator habitat supports more than pollinators

- Wildlife
- Water quantity & quality
- Human health



A single nest of chickadees will need 5,000-10,000 butterfly/moth caterpillars to fledge

Photo: Debra Breton, Flickr

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Pollinators help us with our food but they also serve as a source of food for many other species. The food web is exponentially disrupted without insects. We humans are part of the food web and are impacted when insects struggle. It's in OUR best interest to help.

The Bee Has Been Declared the Most Important Living Being on the Planet. Here is a native bumble bee.



The bee has been declared the most important living being on the planet. There are 20,000 different varieties of bees and it's not just honeybees that are important, but our native species of bees and bumble bees as well.

Native plants are a key to getting things moving in the right direction for helping the pollinators and the entire food web. Native plants are more resilient, needing less water and surviving local conditions, they actually help keep our drinking water clean by filtering run off, and they provide a preferred source of food for our all of our native species of wildlife and insects. You know how it is when you travel to exotic places and you eat unusual food and sometimes wish you could have your regular food from home? We have got to plant native plants and trees for all of our wildlife species. Again, it's in OUR best interest.

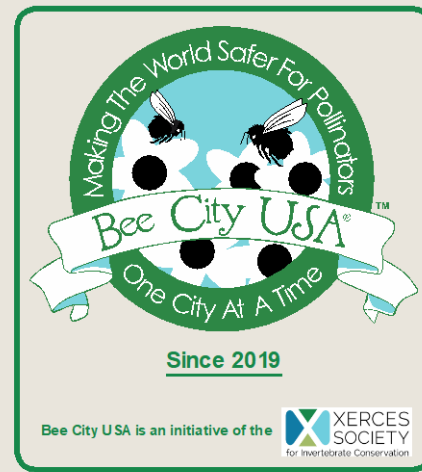
So, Blue Ridge Conservation had several brainstorming sessions and realizing that Lynchburg is already a Tree City, we wondered if there was such a thing as a Bee City. Sure enough, there is! It's a fairly new organization, founded in 2012 by Phyllis Stiles of Asheville, NC, and now a part of the Xerces Society.

Founder of Bee City USA Movement: Phyllis Stiles



Here is a photo of Phyllis Stiles. She is amazing and such a great resource.

Bee City USA is part of the Xerces Society



There has been a great response, nationwide, to the Bee City movement. Here is their logo and the sign you put up if your city becomes a bee city.

Since 2012, 98 Bee City USA Affiliates Certified (as of 10/19)

ARKANSAS Eureka Springs, Mountain View	IOWA Mount Vernon	NEW MEXICO Albuquerque	SOUTH CAROLINA Florence, Greenwood, Lake City
CALIFORNIA Fort Bragg, Orland, Redding, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Seaside, Thousand Oaks, Woodland	KENTUCKY Clarkson	NORTH CAROLINA Asheville, Belmont, Bethania, Boone, Carrboro, Davidson, Durham, Gastonia, Hayesville, Hendersonville, Highlands, Hillsborough, Matthews, Mount Holly, Raleigh, Tabor City, Whiteville, Wilmington, Winston-Salem	TENNESSEE Bell Buckle, Lookout Mountain
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington	MARYLAND Anne Arundel County + Annapolis + Highland Beach, Berlin, Howard County, Salisbury	OHIO Gahanna, Village of Galena, Village of Lithopolis, Vandalia, Wright-Patterson AFB	TEXAS Beaumont, Beeville, Denton
FLORIDA Webster	MICHIGAN Ann Arbor, Charter Township of Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti	OREGON Ashland, Eugene, Gold Hill, Hillsboro, Medford, Newport, Phoenix, Talent, West Linn, Wilsonville	VERMONT Burlington
GEORGIA Atlanta, Canon, Decatur, Dunwoody, Jefferson, Lookout Mountain, Norcross, Pine Lake, Rome	MISSOURI Crestwood, Forsyth		VIRGINIA Lynchburg, Scottsville, Vienna
IDAHO Garden City, Mountain Home, Twin Falls	NEW HAMPSHIRE Durham		WASHINGTON Puyallup, Seattle
ILLINOIS Carlinville, Village of Barrington Hills	NEW JERSEY Allentown Borough, Buena Vista Township, Moorestown Township, Ridgewood		WEST VIRGINIA Williamstown
	NEVADA Carson City		WISCONSIN Appleton, Hales Corners, Madison, Mequon
			WYOMING Gillette

See current list at beecityusa.org/current-cities.html

As of October, 2019 there are 98 Bee Cities and counting. There is also a Bee Campus movement. In Virginia, the first Bee Campus was Randolph College in Lynchburg and now James Madison University has the designation.

What you won't believe, though, is how amazing the Bee City movement is for our garden clubs. Honestly, it's like a dream come true. It is EXTREMELY beneficial to become a Bee City. Our Blue Ridge Conservation approached Lynchburg city officials and they jumped at the chance to participate! With our assistance, Lynchburg applied this past summer and we became the 89th Bee City in the United States. We were the second in Virginia. Scottsville was the first and now Vienna has become the third. But wait, there are 19 in North Carolina! We need to catch up and pass them. We have GCV clubs in 33 cities in Virginia, so that should be easy to do!

There are incentives for cities to form these kinds of partnerships with non-profits like us, one being that they qualify for more grants and funding if they participate in conservation/ecological programs. We were thrilled with their willingness and enthusiasm to work with us. I keep asking them if they have found any downsides and their answer is always a resounding "NO!"

Here's how it works:

How To Become a Bee City:

- City Applies Online
- City Council Adopts a Formal Resolution (template provided) Pledging to Reduce Use of Pesticides/Herbicides/Fungicides, to Plant Native Plants to Support Pollinators, Outreach
- Pay a Small Fee (Based on Population/Lynchburg's was \$400)

In order to become a bee city, your city will need to fill out an online application and send in an application fee, which is based on your local population. Lynchburg's fee was \$400, which our Blue Ridge Conservation paid to get the ball rolling.

Next, after the Xerces Society approves the application, your local city council has to formally adopt a resolution committing to planting native plants, reducing the use of chemicals and providing outreach about these issues.

Commitments of a Bee City:

- Form a Working Committee, bringing together all interested parties
- Put up at Least one Bee City USA sign
- Host Outreach/Educational Event: Historic Garden Week Counts as an Event—the Beauty of This!
- Provide a non GMO Native Plants List/Supplier to Citizens
- Integrate Native Plants into City Planting Plans
- File Annual Renewal Report/Renewal Fee

The commitments of a bee city are:

1. They must form a working committee to handle the duties of being a Bee City. Many of us from Blue Ridge Conservation are on the Bee City working committee, in fact, two of us chair the committee. Many other organizations that share our mission are also represented: The Lynchburg Area Food Council, Randolph College, the Piedmont Beekeepers Association, Lynchburg Water Resources, Lynchburg Buildings and Grounds, Lynchburg Parks & Recreation, etc. What's so great is that we are meeting all of the players and everyone is motivated and excited! It's a great team we are building.
2. The City must agree to put up a sign showing that it has become a Bee City. In Lynchburg, the Public Works department is making the sign, so they are covering the cost of that (otherwise they are about \$75 each). I think we will have several in Lynchburg and they will be placed on the highways near our gateways to the city.

3. Your city must have some kind of outreach to educate the public about the issues facing pollinators and how to help, such as an event. Here's the beauty for our garden clubs: Historic Garden Week qualifies as a Bee City event, so you can tell your city when they apply that you will cover the part about having an annual event.
4. Your city must agree to provide a non GMO native plants list and where to buy them locally and also to integrate native plants into future city plantings. They must also pledge to reduce their use of pesticides/herbicides/fungicides. In Lynchburg, the Parks and Recreation Department is going to create a Bee City website where citizens can find the native plants list and suppliers for our area.
5. The city must file an annual report with Xerces about how they are fulfilling their Bee City commitments and pay the annual renewal fee, which is the same as the application fee. As I mentioned, we paid the application fee but the city is going to take over the renewal fee.

What are some of the benefits of becoming a bee city?

Benefits of Becoming a Bee City:

- Brings community efforts together and into focus
- Institutionalizes "Pollinator Habitat Plan" into City's planting plans
- Connects City to a National Effort
- Support from the Xerces Society on the latest research, best practices, etc. Help is just a phone call or email away.
- Access to Resources such as templates/webinars, Fact Sheets, Social Media Posts, logos, etc.
- Accountability through Working Committee/Annual Reports

It brings all of the interested parties together so everyone can work as a team to make a difference. It connects your city to a national movement. Your city officials will have the support of the Xerces Society and their latest research, they are just a phone call or

email away. Your city can have access to webinars, social media posts, and many other resources. Finally, it gets your city to think about how they landscape public spaces. They are encouraged to use native plants and trees and to reduce chemical use. They may end up reducing mowing, saving costs, and they become tuned into the issues that we hold dear. It enlists the city to use their own resources to implement OUR agenda! So far, it has all been so positive, productive and rewarding.

So, this is why the GCV Pollinator Resolution suggests that member clubs approach their cities about becoming Bee Cities. It's a platform that provides a mutually beneficial relationship.

Here are some of the things our Lynchburg Bee City Working Committee is doing now:

Historic Garden Week qualifies as a Bee City event. We are adding a booth about pollinators. Envision the VW from *Chelsea In Bloom* as a giant bee!



Next year during Historic Garden Week, at Poplar Forest, which is a GCV restoration garden and one of the stops on the Lynchburg ticket, we will have a booth on pollinators and Bee City. We are going to decorate and attract people, just like a flower does for a bee. We are taking inspiration from *Chelsea In Bloom* in London. Imagine this as a bee instead of a Volkswagon bus and you get the idea. We hope to have information on Thomas Jefferson's involvement with bees. We know he maintained wildflower meadows near Poplar Forest.

Our partners from our Bee City working committee will also have displays including the Lynchburg Water Resources department with a display on clean water and how native plants help, and the Lynchburg Area Food Council, with a display on foods affected by pollinators.

Lynchburg Bee City Bringing *Wings of Life* to Town for Free Showing and School Field Trip



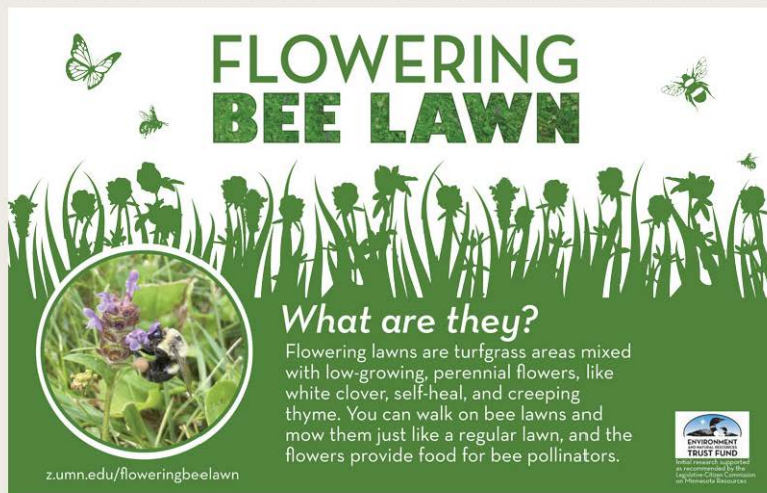
The Bee City Working Committee is partnering with our City Schools and our local Academy of Arts Theater to bring the Disney movie, *Wings of Life*, to town for a school field trip so students will see the movie for free and then there will be a free viewing for the public that same night. The movie is a beautiful documentary narrated by Meryl Streep on the importance of pollinators for our planet.

Lynchburg Bee City Committee Bringing
Hometown Habitat to Town for Free Showing



The Bee City Working Committee will also bring Doug Tallamy's movie *Hometown Habitat* to town for a free viewing. We hope to bring Doug to town to speak as well. And, our Parks and Recreation Department is upgrading the pollinator beds in our parks by adding educational signage about no-mow zones, identifying flowers and explaining why pollinators are important.

Lynchburg is planting "Bee Lawns." You can too.



They are also planning to put in "Bee Lawns" wherever they plant grass in the parks and around town, which will reduce mowing and provide a source of food to pollinators.

Bee Lawns are a special grass seed mix to assist pollinators. We also plan to encourage our members to plant bee lawns.

Blue Ridge Conservation Worked with City Road Crews to Plant 3 Acres of Pollinator Beds in 2019.



Back to Blue Ridge Conservation: In addition to successfully helping Lynchburg become a Bee City, because of this new relationship, we were able to influence our city highway department to plant three acres of pollinator friendly flower beds on our local roads this past summer. Our clubs split the cost of the beds and here is a photo. Our city has since committed to trying native perennial pollinator beds next year, which they hope will last for many years, thus reducing maintenance, watering and mowing over the long term. We have arranged for a local landscape architect to offer pro bono advice on what to plant and the city will provide the labor and seek funding for the plant material. We are so happy that they are committed to the direction we started and will continue with it next year and into the future.

Blue Ridge Conservation is Partnering with Beekeepers to Sell Local Honey to Raise Money for More Pollinator Beds on our Highways.



We partnered with the Piedmont Beekeepers Association to bottle local honey and all proceeds will be used for our pollinator projects. This is our honey label.

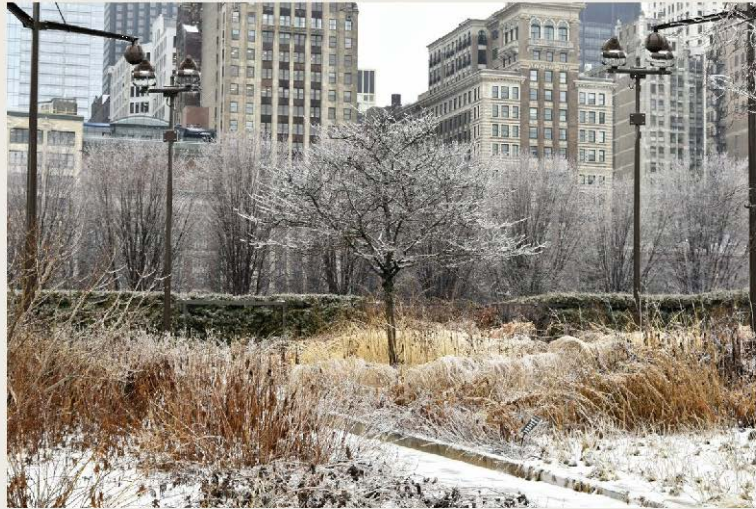
And, we are working with our city schools to possibly plant pollinator friendly native trees around one of our high schools that has an active beekeeping club with over 20 hives. We are talking about approaching local nurseries and places like Lowes and Home Depot to donate left over trees at the end of the season to be used on city grounds and for give-away to local citizens. We are talking about planting a public pollinator demonstration garden. We have asked a local golf course to consider trying "Operation Pollinator," a new program for US golf courses. The list goes on and on, and honestly, we can't contain the enthusiasm. We can barely keep up.

Blue Ridge Conservation has introduced our city to the international “New Perennial” movement of Piet Oudolf for future city plantings.



We were able to influence our City's plant list for their new gateway garden that they are putting in this fall, which is a project of the Lynchburg Garden Club. We told them about Piet Oudolf and his international naturalistic New Perennial movement. Here he is standing in his Lurie Garden at Millenium Park in Chicago. Our city is "all in" and ready to give this new model a try. This style of planting is going to be different from what people are used to seeing and will require some education, and I'm sure there will be challenges. The premise is to leave gardens in place over the winter, as the leftover leaves, seeds and twigs provide food and habitat to insects to help them survive the winter. Finding beauty in the decay in the winter garden is a learning curve, but it's just a more natural approach to gardening and it's always followed by regrowth in the spring.

Lurie Garden, Chicago's Millennium Park. Leave your garden intact all winter.



I think Blue Ridge Conservation will have to help with the education process and the relationship we have formed through Bee City will help.

From the New Perennialist blog I found this quote:

The New Perennial movement in naturalistic planting design continues to creep, climb, bloom, and seed its way around the civilized world all the way from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe to Canada, the U.S., South America, China, New Zealand, and beyond. In every pocket, there's a growing convergence of design, ecology, and architecture along with a deepening sense of what is possible and why it matters more than ever before (i.e. the lopsided battle to restore quality of life for all species on the home planet.) The core mantra of the movement remains the same: to plan, design, grow and sustain plant-driven garden environments for a multi-layered, year-round spectacle that feeds our souls, reconnects us to the natural world, and nurtures biodiversity all in one.

We might be able to give this movement a try here in Virginia along our roadways and in public spaces. Bee City designation gives us the entree to have the conversation with our city and highway officials.

We have a friend at VDOT! Secretary of Transportation, Shannon Valentine, of Lynchburg.



You may not know this, but our current Secretary of Transportation is Shannon Valentine. She is from Lynchburg and she is committed to the conservation programs at VDOT. She recently restructured things so that all conservation related programs are under one umbrella at VDOT, making it more user friendly for highway departments across the state to utilize the programs. This is a good time to work with VDOT on conservation issues. We should not miss our chance.

Consider working with your regional VDOT Office

Work with your City Officials to Connect to VDOT to Access their Pollinator Initiatives.

Your Regional VDOT office has a lot of leeway in how they allocate their funds and they might plant native trees and pollinator-friendly flowers along roads near your city, just ask.

Also because of our new relationship with the city forged when we initiated Bee City, we have put our city highway staff in touch with regional VDOT officials to see about gaining access to VDOT programs for pollinator gardens in our area. Also, aside from the VDOT pollinator programs, your city officials can talk with regional VDOT staff in your area to see if they will consider planting native plants and trees along your area highways. We have learned that regional offices have their own budget and they have some leeway as to how they spend their money to maintain local roads. Also good to know: VDOT gives each city a certain amount of money to maintain local roads, so talk to your city about this money and how it's spent. There might be ways to enhance the roads approaching your city.

Here is a photo of a VDOT pollinator garden at a state rest stop near Winchester.

VDOT Has Funds For Pollinator Gardens.



We are encouraging our members to purchase the Protect Pollinators license plate or the Wildflowers License Plate as monies from the sale of these plates help fund VDOT highway pollinator beds along our state roads.

Get a *Protect Pollinators* or *Wildflowers* License Plate to Fund VDOT Pollinator Initiatives.



Think of it: I will say it again. We have actually gotten our city to formally adopt a resolution committing to our goals and agenda and they will use their resources to implement it.

Bee City USA gives us a platform to start an organized, statewide effort that encompasses conservation, horticulture, and, by having HGW as a Bee City event, it even pulls restoration into the equation!

If we all become Bee Cities, partnering with our local government and highway departments, we could positively impact the health of ecosystems across the Commonwealth with minimal monetary commitment and maximum influence.

We can use Bee City USA as a platform to start an organized, statewide effort that encompasses conservation, horticulture, and, by having Historic Garden Week as a Bee City event, it even pulls restoration into the equation. The more of us that pursue this, the broader our influence and coverage across the state will be.

Could the GCV Create a Statewide Pollinator/Native Plants Network?

If we all become Bee Cities, partnering with our local government and highway departments, we could positively impact the health of ecosystems across the Commonwealth with minimal monetary commitment and maximum influence.

We can promote the use of native plants and trees, address climate change, help pollinators, reduce the use of chemicals, and raise awareness to the many conservation issues that are so important. This format gives us another way to work together, as well, to have a statewide impact. We could communicate as bee cities about what each city is doing, what works, what doesn't, how to find resources, etc. We could facilitate getting VDOT regional offices on the same page all across our state.

It doesn't take much work or money to get the ball rolling and the impact is tremendous. Let's be strategic about our outreach. Take the time to read the new GCV Pollinator Resolution, which you can find as a link on the Conservation page of the GCV website.

Good luck, future Bee Cities!