

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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University of Idaho Extension, Canyon County educates on pollinators

AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension, Canyon County provides pollinator education with majority of participants adopting pollinator friendly landscape practices.

The Situation

In the United States, one third of all agricultural output is dependent on pollinators (NRCS, 2017). Canyon County is the top seed crop producing area in the state with increasing diversity and land in farm production. Over forty different types of crops were grown in Canyon County in 2015. Farming acreage in 2015 was reported to be 198,351 acres (USDA Ag Census 2012). Pollinators are crucial to the success of agriculture in Canyon County.

During the winter of 2006-2007 beekeepers began reporting bee hive losses with mortality rates as high as ninety percent. Symptoms and causes remain a mystery to scientists. However; overuse of pesticides, loss of habitat, urbanization and poor hive management are all believed to cause the decline of pollinator populations. The desire to understand and prevent further pollinator decline has sparked an interest in local gardeners to learn how to keep bees, as well as attract and protect pollinators in their landscapes and gardens.

Our Response

During the 2017 National Pollinator Week, University of Idaho Extension in Canyon County partnered with the Pollinator Partnership, the City of Nampa, the City of Caldwell, Nampa Public Library, Nampa Farmers Market, Caldwell Public Library, Caldwell Farmers Market, Northern Lights Cinema and the



Master Gardener volunteers in Canyon County work with youth building "bee hotels" at a park in Nampa.

Walt Disney Company to offer a week of educational experiences for youth and adults in Canyon County.

University of Idaho Extension offered two workshops to adults: "Gardens a Buzz: Attracting Pollinators to Your Backyard," where learners were given information about a variety of plant material, including native and non-native plant material, which can be used to attract and provide food and habitat for native and non-native pollinators. Learners were taught about bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds and other "accidental" pollinators. Learners were also instructed on proper use of pesticides and Integrated Pest Management methods which can protect pollinators and their habitat. Participants expressed an interest in the development of a resource that identifies native plants and what types of native pollinators they attract.

The second workshop offered was "Backyard Bee Keeping." Learners were given the chance to see all

the tools necessary to keep bees, start their own backyard hives, and make honey. Learners requested the development of a Master Bee Keepers program in Idaho.

Throughout the week youth activities were held at the Nampa Public Library, Caldwell Public Library, Nampa Farmers Market and Caldwell Farmers Market where over 100 youth were able to make seed cards and learn about flowers that attract pollinators.

The Caldwell City Council was on hand at the Caldwell Farmers Market to read a proclamation regarding pollinators and declare Caldwell a “Bee City USA,” a designation given to cities that promote bee-friendly policies as well as practices such as planting bee-friendly landscapes.

A hands-on workshop was held in the University of Idaho’s Pollinator Demonstration Garden located in Nampa’s West Park where youth partnered with adult volunteers to make a “bee hotel.” A ribbon cutting ceremony for a bee hotel installed in the pollinator garden was also held that evening in the park.

The week-long educational experiences culminated with a free showing of “Disney Nature: Wings of Life” at the Northern Lights Cinema in Nampa.

Program Outcomes

Nearly 150 youth attended events held during National Pollinator Week with approximately 100 adults participating throughout the week. Of the National Pollinator Week participants surveyed,

- Sixty-six percent of participants who attended indicated they had an increased understanding of the negative effects improper pesticide use has on pollinator populations and would decrease their use of pesticides.
- Ninety-two percent of participants indicated they were likely to plant native plants to attract native bees. Participants indicated they were most likely to plant milkweed, penstemon, buckwheat and other drought tolerant native plants.
- Sixty-six percent of participants indicated they were likely to install a “bee hotel.”

One family who made a “bee hotel” at West Park later sent a photo of their “bee hotel” stating “We have residents in our hotel!”

As a result of this week long pollinator program, important community partnerships were developed. Participants indicated a strong likelihood of adopting practices which promote a healthier environment for pollinators throughout Canyon County. The City of Caldwell and University of

Idaho Extension developed a strong partnership as a result of becoming a Bee City USA. In the future, the development of a “Native Plants for Native Pollinators,” as well as a Master Bee Keeper program, will be developed in collaboration with Oregon State University and offered in Canyon County to further aid in educating the public in methods that promote pollinator health and sustainable agriculture in Canyon County.

References

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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