

SEVEN BENDS AND FRIENDS



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF SEVEN BENDS NURSERY



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NEXT FAIRS

Blandy Garden Fair
• May 12, 13, 14

Spring Garden Day
• May 20 (9-3)

Letter from Lara

For us at Seven Bends Nursery, planting to protect our pollinators is one of the driving forces behind why we do what we do. We rejoice at seeing new life come into the garden as we remove our lawn and replace it with native plants. It really is amazing how after just a couple of years we can see more bees, butterflies, and birds in our garden from practicing sustainable and eco-friendly gardening methods. It's also entertaining... our resident branch manager, Hutchinson, has yet to capture a "spicy fly", try as he might!

We're also continually grateful that we are a part of the growing native plant movement and the community it is generating. And, we want to know more about you! We'd love to hear your pictures and stories on our Facebook page, Instagram, or even via email. So, please share with us :)

Thank you for "Bee" -ing the change we want to see in the world!

Dr. Lara Lacher

Save the Native Bees

“Save the bees”. This saying has circulated the globe, plastering tee shirts, bumper stickers, and other fun merchandise.

But, what does it mean, and how do we actually achieve it?

Our honey-producing heroes:

Honey Bees are believed to have been first domesticated in ancient Egypt 4,500-7,000 years ago. The European Honey Bee, *Apis mellifera* wasn't introduced to the United States until the 17th century when settlers brought them over from Europe to continue established honey production practices. Since their introduction, they have been farmed to produce a dizzying array of goods, including chapstick, soaps, and dietary supplements. These goods are the product of bees' hard work and their thousands of trips visiting the flowers found around their hive. This work results in the pollination of flowers as well as food crops, an essential job for food production in the US. Given their contribution to human society, it makes sense for us to honor the honey bee. *However, the saying “Save the Bees” is not referring to them.*



Pollinator Events in VA

Pollination Station, Big Island Library
Spring Seminar, Bedford County Master Gardeners

May 9th, 5:30-6:30 pm

Pollinators Tour at Old City Cemetery

May 21st, 1:00 pm

Forest Friends-Buzz like a Bee-
Chesapeake

May 30th, 9:30-10:30 pm

Fredricks County Master Gardener-
Pollinators Love Herbs

June 10th, 10-12pm

Manassas Bee Festival

June 24th, 10-2 pm



Pollinator Power!



Thanks to the work of beekeepers that effectively farm the European honey bee species, and contrary to popular opinion, honey bees are not at risk of population decline or extinction. In fact, Scott Black, the executive director of the Xerces Society has stated, "There are more honey bees on the planet today than at any time in history". Truth is, the bees that are really in trouble are our native bees. Therefore, the saying "Save the Bees" is directed towards the diverse, beautiful, and essential group of insects that are our native bees.

Who are these native bees?

Well, we don't have enough space to list everyone as Virginia alone has 400 species, and altogether the United States has about 4,000! Our native bees vary in shape, size, and color - these different bees have different lives. Each species has its own habitat requirement - some make hives in trees, and some are found buried in the ground. Some bee species may be into community living, while others are solitary like the Blue Orchard Mason Bee (if you want to read about an interesting bee check these guys out!).

Why should we care?

We need them! Our native pollinators, including native bees, are estimated to be responsible for 80% of the pollination services in agriculture. There has been such a huge decline in native bee populations that places like Southern California rent honeybee hives to pollinate crops such as almonds to make up for the loss.

Native bees are also an essential part of our ecosystems, serving as food sources for native wildlife as well as the primary pollinators responsible for sustaining many of our native plant populations. Unlike honeybees who only pollinate a small percentage of native flowers, the diverse assortment of native bees supports an equally diverse number of plant species, making native bees essential for conserving functioning and resilient ecosystems.

Unfortunately, scientists are concerned about native bees as many of their population numbers have been decreasing at an alarming rate due to a number of anthropogenic disturbances such as pesticide use, habitat fragmentation, and climate change. The Center for Biological Diversity reports that 1 in 6 bee species are regionally extinct and more than 40% are vulnerable to extinction. For example, the American Bumblebee, *Bombus pensylvanicus*, which was once abundant throughout the United States has seen a population decrease of about 90% in the last two decades. Another, the Rusty Patched Bumblebee, *Bombus affinis*, was listed under federal protection in 2017, after scientists measured widespread, steep declines across the continental United States.





What can you do?

Therefore, the best thing to do for our native bees is to protect their habitat. The second best is to provide resources for the bees in your own garden! You can do this by:

- Planting native plants
- Skip the pesticides
- Leave the leaves and keep a “messy” garden
- Continue to learn about native bees and all of our native pollinators
- Get involved - Educate yourselves, educate others, and be active in environmental policy-making.

Hopefully, the small actions we take will build upon themselves as we strive to do better for the environment and ourselves.

Happy Planting, Everyone!

Recommended book: *Our Native Bees* by Paige Embry is an easy and interesting read to get to know our native bees and why they are struggling.

Resources:

Bigger Than Bees:

<https://www.pollinator.org/bigger-than-bees>

Wild Bee Conservation:

<https://www.xerces.org/endangered-species/wild-bees>

Are Honey bees Native to North America?:

<https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/are-honey-bees-native-north-america>

Rusty Patched Bumble Bee:

<https://www.fws.gov/species/rusty-patched-bumble-bee-bombus-affinis>

Planting Natives to Attract Pollinators and Birds:

<https://www.plantvirginianatives.org/planting-natives-to-attract-pollinators-and-birds>

Focus on Native Bees, Not Honey Bees:

<https://blog.nature.org/2019/08/19/focus-on-native-bees-not-honey-bees/>

