

Bee habitats installed to support County resolution

On February 9, 2016, the Board of Ramsey County Commissioners passed a resolution to declare Ramsey County “pollinator-friendly.” The County has since undertaken efforts to educate residents on the importance of pollinator-friendly best practices and garner support of this designation in municipalities within the County.

In response to the County’s efforts, the Parks, Trails and Recreation Committee (PTRC) has collaborated with resident volunteers and the University of Minnesota to install three bee habitats on City park and civic property. Arden Hills is now an active part of this County-wide environmental effort to increase pollinator habitat, increase pollinator forage, decrease toxicity, and raise awareness of these important environmental issues.

Key volunteer expertise

The knowledge base and generosity of resident volunteers figures directly in the City’s participation in this initiative. Arden Hills resident Mike Noonan, along with his cousin Andy Murray, who raises bees on a farm in Rice County, worked with the PTRC to bring two honeybee hives to City property.

One hive has been installed in Floral Park to provide natural pollinators for the gardens that City resident Dr. Robert Mullin continues to cultivate. It is set back in a clearing among some trees and bushes approximately twenty feet off of a portion of the walking trail north of the pollinator gardens.

A second hive has been installed at City Hall to further promote growth of local honeybee populations and natural pollinators in the area. The hive is located among the tress and tall wild grasses on the north side of the building and is easily visible from the windowed lobby area. The City plans to create and install signage at both hive locations to make residents aware of the installations and provide additional educational information.

Murray expects to make frequent visits to Arden Hills throughout the summer to check on the bees and maintain the hives. At the end of the summer, he plans to harvest any honey produced and donate a portion of the harvest to the City to do with as they choose. The bees and their hives will then be removed to their winter home in Arkansas.

University bee project

In May, a bee nesting block was installed in Crepeau Nature Preserve and is being observed and maintained through the summer by the Minnesota Bee Atlas, a citizen science project of the University of Minnesota Extension. (Although the exact location of the block within Crepeau was not known as *Arden Hills Notes* went to press, signage will be posted at the site.)

The nesting block will provide a place for wild bees to lay their eggs. The block will be collected in September, the larvae will be raised to adults, and the species will be identified and entered into a statewide database.

According to Program Coordinator Britt Forsberg, "We chose Crepeau for a bee block because it has a large area of high-quality natural habitat and a nearby volunteer who is interested in monitoring the block. We wanted to choose locations where there would be strong existing bee populations as well as having plenty of wild flowers for bees to forage. The native bees will use primarily native plants, although some non-native plants like dandelions and clover are important resources for bees."

The study will cover three field sessions (2016-2018), but project staff has only asked sites to commit to one season. "We'd certainly be open to installing a block at Crepeau again next year!" Forsberg said.