



# Beesponsible® Outreach Toolkit For Municipalities

## About this Toolkit

Beesponsible® is aimed at celebrating our deep connection to bees and providing resources that inspire us all to do our part to reverse the decline of these important pollinators. Beesponsible® has teamed up with the National Wildlife Federation in support of pollinator friendly gardening. We need your help to spread the word about the importance of bees, the challenges they face, and the actions your fellow community members can take to help. This toolkit is designed specifically to help cities, towns, counties and municipalities of all kinds to engage their citizens in becoming Beesponsible. In this toolkit you will find a model Beesponsible proclamation as well as a template email and social media communications that will help you engage your community members.

**You can use the content provided in this toolkit to spread the word or access other resources (see links) to create your own.**

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## About Bees and Pollinators

### Bees

Bees are our most important and efficient pollinators (more on that below). The most well-known bee species is the European honey bee, which was introduced to North America and primarily exists as a domesticated species in hives managed by commercial agriculture and hobbyist beekeepers for their honey, beeswax, and pollination services. As a result honey bees are important to our food supply and the agriculture economy.

Beyond the non-native honey bee, North America has over 4,000 species of native bees. They come in all sizes, from large carpenter and bumble bees, to tiny sweat, mason and leafcutter bees. Some have the black and yellow coloration we associate with bees, but many lack stripes or have shiny green, black or blue coloration. Bumble bees and some sweat bees form communal hives but most native bee species don't form hives for nesting or produce honey. Ninety percent of native bees are solitary nesters, laying eggs in tunnels in the ground, in hollow plant stems or decaying wood. Instead of producing honey to feed their larvae, they provision individual eggs with a ball of nectar and pollen and leave the larvae to feed and pupate with no direct care.

Wild flowering plants rely on native bees for pollination and reproduction, and some native bees are also important pollinators of agricultural crops.

### Pollinators

Pollinators are animals that move from flower-to-flower while searching for protein-rich pollen or high-energy nectar to eat. In North America, bees, butterflies, moths and some species of beetles, wasps and flies are pollinators, along with hummingbirds and two species of bat.

Pollinators are essential to the food supply for people as well as for wildlife. As they visit flowers in search of food, they are dusted by pollen and move it to the next flower, fertilizing the plant and allowing it to reproduce and form seeds, berries, fruits and other plant foods that form the foundation of the food chain for other species—including humans.

One third of all the food we eat is the direct result of animal pollinators. Some wildlife rely on the natural food chains that cannot function without pollination. Insect pollinators are themselves important food sources for other wildlife. Countless birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians eat the protein and fat-rich eggs, larvae, or adult forms of insect pollinators, or feed them to their young.

**Without healthy pollinator populations—bees in particular—our agricultural food production and natural ecosystems cannot function.**

## Bees in Crisis

Bees have been declining, both commercially-managed honey bee colonies (with over 28 percent annual loss rate over a recent decade) and some native bees, including the once-common rusty patched bumble bee, which was recently listed as endangered in the U.S. Other pollinators are declining too, such as the beloved monarch butterfly, which has declined by nearly 90 percent in just the last twenty years.

Potential causes of these declines include habitat destruction, disease, agricultural and lawn and garden practices (including use of pesticides), honey bee management techniques, changes in land use, invasive species, climate change, or a combination of these stresses together.

Below are the top contributing factors to the decline of bees. By addressing these, we have the potential to reverse that trend:

### 1) Habitat Loss

Bees need native plant communities that supply the pollen and nectar they feed themselves and their young. Many bees are pollen specialists and rely on specific native plants to provide this food resource. For example, approximately 30 percent of the 450 species of bees native to the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern United States are pollen specialists. Without those “host plants” those bee species decline. Bees also need nesting habitat. Approximately 70 percent of native bee species nest in underground tunnels and 30 percent of native species nest in hollow plant stems or tunnels in decaying wood.

### 2) Pesticides

Use of insecticides can kill pollinators and herbicides destroy their habitat. Evidence is mounting that the widely used neonicotinoids insecticides are a significant problem. This class of systemic insecticides make all parts of the plant, including nectar and pollen, fatal to bees and other insects. Similarly, the use of herbicide-resistance crops has led to the increase in use of herbicides, which kill native plants that supply bees and other pollinators with habitat.

### 3) Disease

Increases in parasites and pathogens are affecting commercial honey bee hives, and are possibly exacerbated by hive management practices and lack of genetic diversity in the managed honey bee populations. These diseases can be passed on to some native bee populations.

## You Can Help

We can help address these issues on a personal level by creating bee-friendly gardens and registering them as Certified Wildlife Habitats with the National Wildlife Federation. We must also get active “beyond our backyards” and Beesponsible® in our communities by making choices that will help reverse the alarming trend of bee decline.

**This toolkit provides outreach templates that will allow municipalites and communitites of all kinds to promote on the ground action that will help declining bee and pollinator populations.**

### KEY DATES FOR OUTREACH

**June** – Great Outdoors Month  
[www.greatoutdoorsmonth.org](http://www.greatoutdoorsmonth.org)

**Third Week in June** – Pollinator Week  
[pollinator.org/pollinator-week](http://pollinator.org/pollinator-week)

**Third Saturday in August** – National Honeybee Day  
[www.nationalhoneybeeday.com](http://www.nationalhoneybeeday.com)



# Proclamation Template

Proclamations are a useful tool for a municipality to call public attention to the decline of bees and pollinators and to express a city's support to become more Beesponsible®. Mayors can issue proclamations at any time, but they are often effective when tied to specific local events (like the dedication of a new pollinator garden at city hall) or national days that celebrate sustainability, wildlife and pollinators (see dates above).

While proclamations typically do not have major legal significance, they can help raise the visibility of an issue with the public and are an excellent policy tool for outlining future actions that a municipality might take to become more Beesponsible®.

Below is a template Beesponsible® proclamation that can be customized for your community:

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## Beesponsible® proclamation template

WHEREAS, North America is blessed with diverse wildlife and abundant natural resources, including more than 4,000 native-bee species, honey bees that are essential to our nation's agriculture and many other insect pollinators.

WHEREAS, Bees are our most important and efficient pollinators which are essential to the food supply for people and for wildlife.

WHEREAS, One third of all the food we eat is the direct result of animal pollinators and wildlife also rely on the natural food chains that cannot function without pollination.

WHEREAS, Insect pollinators are themselves important food sources for other wildlife including the countless birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians that eat the protein and fat-rich eggs, larvae, or adult forms of insect pollinators, or feed them to their young.

WHEREAS, One-third of our nation's wildlife species are at risk of extinction in coming decades like the rusty-patched bumble bee that recently became the first North American bee species in the continental U.S. added to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species list.

WHEREAS, cities, towns and counties have a critical role to play to help save bees and pollinators by creating pollinator habitat at parks, municipal buildings, road sides and throughout the community where our citizens live, work, learn, play and worship.

WHEREAS, I encourage other city officials across our great nation to take a stand with me so that our nation's bees and wildlife will once again flourish across the continent.

Now, therefore, I, **MAYOR NAME** of the **CITY NAME**, do hereby proclaim **DATE** as: "SAVE THE BEES DAY" in **CITY NAME**.

# Template Emails, Newsletter Stories, and Social Media Posts

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## Longer Email or Newsletter Story Template

This summer <CITY NAME> is teaming up with the National Wildlife Federation and Beesponsible® to help raise awareness about bee and pollinator decline.

The once-common rusty patched bumble bee was recently listed as endangered in the United States—it was the first North American bee ever put on that list. Other pollinators are declining too. Honey bees are being impacted by colony collapse disorder and disease.

Why are we so concerned about saving the bees? One third of all the food we eat is the direct result of animal pollinators. Pollinators are essential to the food supply for people and for wildlife. As they visit flowers in search of food, they are dusted by pollen and move it to the next flower, fertilizing the plant and allowing it to reproduce and form seeds, berries, fruits and other plant foods that form the foundation of the food chain for other species—including humans. Without healthy pollinator populations—bees in particular—our agricultural food production and natural ecosystems cannot function.

<CITY NAME> is committed to helping reverse this decline and we all have a role to play by creating healthy habitat for bees, pollinators and wildlife EVERYWHERE – where we live, learn, work, play and worship.

*<INSERT DETAILS ABOUT YOUR CITY'S BEE, POLLINATOR AND WILDLIFE EFFORTS. ARE YOU A PART OF NWF'S COMMUNITY WILDLIFE HABITAT PROGRAM? WORKING ON SPECIFIC PROJECTS?>*

Please join us and help plant beautiful, native nectar plants, shrubs and trees throughout our community to help save these magnificent species! Learn more at [beesponsible.com](https://beesponsible.com).

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## Shorter Email, Newsletter Story, or Facebook Post Templates

### SAMPLE 1

What's so special, wonderful and important about the bee? Visit [Beesponsible.com](https://Beesponsible.com) to gain an appreciation for the wonder of the honeybee as well as the more than 4,000 native bee species in North America.

### SAMPLE 2

This spring <CITY NAME> is committing to Beesponsible® gardening and landscaping. What's that mean? <CITY NAME> is planting bee-friendly flowers and trees throughout the city and reducing the use of pesticides and chemicals. I hope you'll join me in learning more at [@Beesponsible](https://@Beesponsible).

### **SAMPLE 3**

Native bees are fascinating, and like the honey bee, they are declining and need our help by putting native plants in our gardens this spring! Many bees are pollen specialists and rely on native plants to provide this food resource, so we need a variety of native plants and trees in our gardens. Without those “host plants” those bee species decline. Bees also need nesting habitat since most do not nest in hives. Approximately 70 percent of native bee species nest in underground tunnels and 30 percent of native species nest in hollow plant stems or tunnels in decaying wood. I hope you’ll join <CITY NAME> in our effort to help bees and learn more at: [beesponsible.com](https://beesponsible.com)

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## **Twitter or Instagram Posts**

### **SAMPLE 1**

SAVE THE BEES – Our honey bees and native bees are in trouble. Their populations are declining. You can make a difference in your own garden by partnering with <@CITYNAMETWITTERHANDLE> @NWF and @Beesponsible LEARN MORE: [beesponsible.com/do/beesponsible-living/](https://beesponsible.com/do/beesponsible-living/)

### **SAMPLE 2**

Did you know that 70% of bees live in tunnels underground? You can help these bees by leaving a bare patch in your yard without grass or mulch for these native bees to find a home. LEARN MORE: [beesponsible.com/do/beesponsible-living/](https://beesponsible.com/do/beesponsible-living/)

### **SAMPLE 3**

Last year the U.S put the first North American bee on the endangered species list. Honey bee colonies are declining. Join @NWF <@CITYNAMETWITTERHANDLE> and @Beesponsible to improve the outlook for #pollinators at [beesponsible.com/do/beesponsible-living/](https://beesponsible.com/do/beesponsible-living/)

### **SAMPLE 4**

Ditch the chemicals in the garden this year! A pesticide free garden is a healthy garden for you and your family and for the bees that rely on healthy plants and their pollen and nectar. Learn more at: [beesponsible.com/do/beesponsible-living/](https://beesponsible.com/do/beesponsible-living/)

### **SAMPLE 5**

Don’t have a yard to plant for bees? You can still help! Consider putting a container garden on your balcony, roof or front porch. Join a community garden. Help a local school or library plant a garden. Learn more at: [beesponsible.com/do/beesponsible-living/](https://beesponsible.com/do/beesponsible-living/).



## Helpful Links

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Beesponsible Home Page - [beesponsible.com](http://beesponsible.com)

Beesponsible Twitter - [twitter.com/beesponsible](https://twitter.com/beesponsible)

Beesponsible Facebook - [facebook.com/beesponsible](https://facebook.com/beesponsible)

Beesponsible Instagram - [instagram.com/beesponsible](https://instagram.com/beesponsible)

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NWF Garden for Wildlife Home Page - [www.nwf.org/garden](http://www.nwf.org/garden)

NWF Certify Your Habitat Page - [www.nwf.org/certify](http://www.nwf.org/certify)

NWF Pollinator Page - [www.nwf.org/pollinators](http://www.nwf.org/pollinators)

Being There for Bees - [www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2016/AprilMay/Gardening/Bees](http://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2016/AprilMay/Gardening/Bees)

Plant for Early Pollinators -

[www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2017/Oct-Nov/Gardening/Plants-for-Early-Pollinators](http://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2017/Oct-Nov/Gardening/Plants-for-Early-Pollinators)

Build a Beehouse - [www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/Young/Build-a-Bee-House](http://www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/Young/Build-a-Bee-House)

Unusual Pollinators - [www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2016/JuneJuly/Gardening/Unusual-Pollinators](http://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2016/JuneJuly/Gardening/Unusual-Pollinators)

NWF Blog - Restricting Problem Insecticides to Protect Bees and other Pollinators -

[blog.nwf.org/2017/07/restricting-problem-insecticides-to-protect-bees-and-other-pollinators](http://blog.nwf.org/2017/07/restricting-problem-insecticides-to-protect-bees-and-other-pollinators)

NWF Blogs on “Native Bees” - [blog.nwf.org/tags/native-bees](http://blog.nwf.org/tags/native-bees)

NWF Blogs on “Pollinators” - [blog.nwf.org/tags/pollinators](http://blog.nwf.org/tags/pollinators)



### PHOTO CREDITS

PAGE 1: HONEY BEES (BACKGROUND) - RACHAEL BONOAN, BEE (CENTER) - GEORGE RITCHEY, BUMBLE BEE (RIGHT) - LISA ROGERS  
PAGE 2: BEE - BELINDA BRAUNSTEIN; SQUASH BEE (RIGHT) - JACK SCHULTZ; PAGE 3: BEES - KATHY NOTEBOOM; PAGE 4: BEE - MARK BRINEGAR