



## CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

### E327A

## Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects

### Conservation Practice 327: Conservation Cover

**APPLICABLE LAND USE:** Crop (Annual & Mixed); Crop (Perennial); Forest; Associated Ag Land; Farmstead

**RESOURCE CONCERN:** Animals

**ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN:** 5 Years

### Enhancement Description

Seed or plug nectar and pollen producing plants in non-cropped areas such as field borders, vegetative barriers, contour buffer strips, grassed waterways, shelterbelts, hedgerows, windbreaks, conservation cover, and riparian forest and herbaceous buffers.

### Criteria

- Habitat areas must be at least 0.5 acres for each 40 acres of the selected land use. Where the selected land use is less than 40 acres, the required amount of habitat will be reduced according to the ratio of 0.5 acres to 40 acres. Where the selected land use is greater than 40 acres, the 0.5-acre habitat areas(s) may be a single site or interspersed sites in the larger land use areas as agreed to by the NRCS State Biologist.
- Establish habitat for pollinators (A) and beneficial insects (B) as described below:

#### **A. Pollinators**

1. NRCS at the state level will develop lists of plants suitable for pollinator habitat.

The lists must emphasize as many native species as practical.

E327A – Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects	July 2019	Page   1
---	-----------	----------



## CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

2. The habitat planting will include (as a minimum) three early, three mid, and three late flowering species from the NRCS state list including forbs, legumes, vines, shrubs, and/or trees. Plants that produce toxic nectar will not be planted.
3. Any other use of the pollinator habitat area must not compromise its intended purpose.

### B. Beneficial insects

1. Identify pest species and associated beneficial insects targeted for control.
2. Inventory existing conditions on the farm to determine habitat needs of selected beneficial insects, including:
  - (a) Permanent insectary sites,
  - (b) Augmentation of existing hedgerows, field borders or other odd areas adjacent to fields, and/or
  - (c) Trap crop areas.
3. Plant selection should be matched to attract identified beneficial insects.
4. Beneficial insect habitat may include either annual or perennial cover. If annual cover is used, the cover must be replanted each year during the life of the contract.
5. NRCS at the state level will develop lists of plants suitable for beneficial insect habitat. The lists must emphasize as many native species as practical.

### C. Planting criteria for both pollinators and beneficial insects

1. Site selection should consider existing weed pressures and available methods of control, delay planting if high weed pressure requires aggressive treatment.
2. Site preparation and plant establishment shall be accomplished according to the appropriate NRCS conservation practice and specifications.
3. Successful establishment is when the planting provides at least 80% soil cover



# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

when visually estimated and the resultant cover consists primarily of the early, mid, and late blooming species planted for pollinators and/or other beneficial insects.

4. Insecticides should not be used in the habitat planting area.
5. Herbicides are allowed during site preparation (prior to planting) when it is necessary to eliminate competing weeds from a planting area in order for nectar and pollen producing plants to establish.
6. After a pollinator enhancement has been planted, herbicides may be spot-sprayed to remove broad-leaf weeds, or grass-selective herbicides may be applied to larger areas to eliminate persistent weedy grasses. Similarly, the entire site may be mowed in the first year post-planting to reduce annual or biennial weeds that persist (site should be mowed just before dominant annual weeds flower).

## D. Operation and maintenance for both pollinators and beneficial insects

1. Management and/or maintenance activities such as mowing, haying, burning, or grazing must be conducted outside of the growing season or bloom period. Maintenance should be done on less than 1/3 of the acreage during any given year, except during the first year post-planting.
2. Insecticides should not be used in the habitat planting area. Even non-synthetic botanical insecticides can harm beneficial insects. If adjacent crop areas are treated with insecticides use one or more of the following actions to limit insecticides in the pollinator habitat area:
  - (a) Create insecticide free buffers in the first 25 feet of crop area,
  - (b) Use application methods that minimize drift to the adjacent habitat,
  - (c) Apply active ingredients in the evening when most insect pollinators are not active.
3. The planted habitat areas must be regularly inspected for invasive and/or noxious plants or other plants that may compromise the purpose of this enhancement. Undesirable species should be controlled using the method least damaging method, for example, spot-spraying with herbicide or physical removal.



4. If habitat is part of an organic farming operation, only materials allowed according to the USDA National Organic Program's National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances may be used.

## CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM





**Documentation and Implementation Requirements**

**CONSERVATION  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROGRAM**

Participant will:

- Prior to implementation, develop a map showing the location of proposed habitat areas with notes on land use adjacent to proposed habitat areas to discuss with NRCS staff.
- During implementation, purchase specified seed mix or plant materials that meets pollinator-specific seeding or planting requirements provided by NRCS.
- During implementation, follow habitat establishment guidance provided by NRCS in the state specifications for NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Conservation Cover (Code 327).
- After implementation, provide for review by NRCS a list of management and/or maintenance activities carried out to manage the habitat areas and the dates on which those activities occurred.
- After implementation, take and provide for review photographs as documentation of pollinator habitat area condition.

NRCS will:

- Prior to implementation, discuss with participant the proposed habitat areas to verify they are in locations suitable for the enhancement.
- Prior to implementation, provide participant with suitable plant lists.
- Prior to implementation, provide and explain State specifications for NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Conservation Cover (Code 327).
- Prior to implementation, provide participant with a recommended seed mix and planting specifications per above criteria (grass/forb ratio; number of forb species per bloom period for pollinator habitat plantings)
- After implementation, verify successful establishment (per planting criteria above) by review of documentation and photographs.



**NRCS Documentation Review:**

I have reviewed all required participant documentation and have determined the participant has implemented the enhancement and met all criteria and requirements.

**CONSERVATION  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROGRAM**

Participant Name \_\_\_\_\_ Contract Number \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Applied \_\_\_\_\_ Fiscal Year Completed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
NRCS Technical Adequacy Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date





**IOWA SUPPLEMENT TO  
CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY**

**CONSERVATION  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROGRAM**

**E327A**

Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects

**Additional Criteria for Iowa**

- Use the [Iowa Pollinator Habitat Job Sheet](#) for guidance to apply this activity. The Pollinator Habitat Job Sheet contains a list of plants suitable for pollinator habitat, information on pollinator food sources, identification of existing beneficial insect habitat and guidance on establishment and management of pollinator habitat.
- Develop seeding plans with the use of the Iowa Native Prairie Seeding Calculator. Use the “pollinator mix check sheet” contained within the Seeding Calculator to ensure the mix meets Iowa pollinator habitat guidance.
- A reference for the successful establishment of native plants is [Establishing and Managing Native Prairie](#) located under Iowa NRCS Publications.
- To assist with the identification of pest species and associated beneficial insects, Iowa NRCS has consulted with Iowa State University Entomologists to provide the following guidance: Establishing and maintaining a diverse community of native flowering plants will provide food and cover for many beneficial insects in Iowa including Lady beetles, parasitoid wasps and Pirate bugs. Lady beetles, parasitoid wasps and Pirate bugs provide benefits by preying on corn borer, leafhopper and aphid species which are common pest in Iowa crop production. Participants and conservation planners may use these identified beneficial insects for purposes of implementing this activity and also have the option to select different pest and associated beneficial insects to manage.
- Insect and pollinator information can be found at the NRCS website: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/plantsanimals/pollinate/>