# Native Bee Benefits

How to increase native bee pollination on your farm in several simple steps

For Pennsylvania and New Jersey Farmers



# In this pamphlet, you can find out...

- The most effective native bees in PA and NJ and how to identify them
- Their habitat and foraging needs
- Strategies for encouraging their presence on your farm
- Sources of funding



## Why are native bees important?

Insect pollination services are a highly important agricultural input. Two-thirds of crop varieties require animal pollination for production and many crops have higher quality after insect pollination. Bees are the most important pollinators in most ecosystems. They facilitate reproduction and improve seed set for half of Pennsylvania's and New Jersey's top fruit and vegetable commodities. Estimated value of their pollination services range from \$6 - 263 million each year.

Honeybee numbers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey have been declining over the past several years. Beekeepers recorded overwinter losses of 26- 48% and 17-40% respectively in PA and NJ between 2006 and 2009. These losses are much higher than the typical 15% losses seen in previous years. Although many farmers rent managed honeybees to increase crop yield and quality, surveys of small to medium size PA and NJ farms have shown that native bees provide a substantial portion of pollination services. By increasing the number and diversity of native bees, PA and NJ farmers may be able to counter rising costs of rented bee colonies while supporting sustainable native plant and pollinator communities.

#### Why is insect pollination so important?

Bees can efficiently transfer pollen between *different* plant individuals of the *same* species. This cross pollination makes for healthier and more genetically diverse plant populations. It also helps crops such as watermelon, which have separate pollen providing (male) and fruit producing (female) flowers, or apples, for which many varieties require cross-pollination from a different variety (called "self-incompatibility").

## Native Bee Species

## you are likely to find on your property. Black and white images represent actual bee size.



What to look for: Hairy, yellow and black, 0.3-0.6 in. (0.8-1.6 cm)

#### Bombus impatiens

#### Common Eastern Bumble Bee

**Abundance:** Very common

Range: Broadly throughout Eastern US

Season: March –November

Sociality: Eusocial

Typical Flight Distance: 2-4.6 mi. (3.3-7.5 km)

**Nesting:** Below ground or in existing pockets such as rodent nests, under logs, stone walls.

Found in a wide variety of habitats. Up to 400 workers per colony.

Foraging: Broad generalist

Recommended native plants: Asclepias syriaca, Apocynum cannabinum, Pycnanthemum tenuifolium,

Cirsium discolor

Key crops pollinated: Blueberry, Cranberry, Muskmelon, Squash, Pepper, Tomato, Watermelon



What to look for: Hairy, yellow most of body, 0.4 in. (1 cm) (John Ascher/www.discoverlife.org)

#### Bombus fervidus Golden Northern Bumble Bee

Abundance: Not common

Range: Broadly throughout Eastern US

Season: April-October Sociality: Eusocial

Typical Flight Distance: 0.9-1.8 mi. (1.4-3 km)

**Nesting:** Above or below ground in sunny, dry locations, tend to prefer fields. Their nests may be

in old rodent nests or may simply resemble field mouse nests.

Foraging: Broad generalist

Recommended native plants: Asclepias syriaca, Apocynum cannabinum, Pycnanthemum tenuifolium,

Cirsium discolor

**Key crops pollinated:** Muskmelon, Squash, Pepper, Tomato, Watermelon

#### Ceratina calcarata, C. dupla and C. strenua

#### **Small Carpenter Bees**

Abundance: Common

Range: Broadly throughout Eastern US

Season: March-October **Sociality:** Solitary

Typical Flight Distance: 22-87 yd. (20-80 m)

Nesting: Chews nest cells in pithy stems, rotten vines or other wood substrate. Found in a wide

variety of habitats.

Foraging: Broad generalist

Recommended native plants: Erigeron strigosus, Pycnanthemum tenuifolium, Solidago odora,

Euthamia graminifolia

Key crops pollinated: Muskmelon

Big bees (like *B. fervidus*) can typically fly farther than small bees (like Ceratina). The cartoon insets within the images show the real size of the bee.



"Eusocial" means the species lives

colony communicate and cooperate

"Generalist" bee species

contrast to "specialist" bee

species which forage on a

restricted group of plants.

visit a large variety of plants and crops, in

in colonies with a reproductive queen and sterile workers who are

her daughters. All bees in the

in caring for the brood.

What to look for: Hairless, dark metallic brown to black, 0.2-0.3 in. (0.5-0.8 cm)

#### Habropoda laboriosa Southeastern Blueberry Bee

**Abundance:** Common Range: East coast of US

Season: May Sociality: Solitary

**Typical Flight Distance:** 1-2.3 mi. (1.7-3.7 km)

Nesting: Burrows in dry, sandy soils singly or in groups. Found in low-lying coastal habitat.

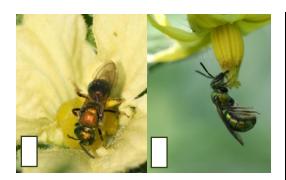
Foraging: Specialist

Recommended native plants: N/A Key crops pollinated: Blueberry

In "solitary" bee species, every female lays eggs and there are no queens or workers. Each female usually builds and inhabits her own nest.



What to look for: Hairy yellow shoulders, black body, 0.6 in. (1.5 cm) (Jerry Payne/USDA ARS)



What to look for: Hairless, metallic blue to green, 0.2-0.3 in (0.5-0.8 cm) (Augochlora pura, left; Augochlorella aurata, right)

#### Augochlora pura and Augochlorella aurata

#### Blue-Green Sweat Bees

Abundance: Common

Range: Broadly throughout US

Season: April-October

Sociality: Eusocial (Augochlorella striata) and Solitary (Augochlora pura)

Typical Flight Distance: 66-230 vd. (60-210 m)

<u>Nesting:</u> Soil burrowing in well-drained areas, found in a wide variety of habitats (*Augochlorella striata*). Burrows into rotting wood (e.g. logs, stumps) (*Augochlora pura*).

Foraging: Broad generalist

Recommended native plants: Apocynum cannabinum, Erigeron strigosus, Pycnanthemum

tenuifolium, Solidago odora, Euthamia graminifolia

**Key crops pollinated:** Muskmelon, Pepper, Strawberry, Tomato, Watermelon



What to look for: Short, fine hairs, dark brown to black metallic color, 0.2 in. (0.5 cm) (Karl Volkman/ www.bugguide.net)

## Lasioglossum (Dialictus) Dark Sweat Bee

**Abundance:** Very common **Range:** Throughout eastern US

<u>Season:</u> April-October <u>Sociality:</u> Eusocial/Rarely solitary

Sociality: Eusocial/Rarely solitary

Typical Flight Distance: 11-450 yd. (10-410 m)

Nesting: Soil burrowing in well-drained areas. Found in a wide variety of habitats.

Foraging: Broad generalist

Native plant use: Apocynum cannabinum, Erigeron strigosus, Pycnanthemum tenuifolium, Solidago

odora, Euthamia graminifolia

**Key crops pollinated:** Muskmelon, Pepper, Tomato, Watermelon

#### Halictus confusus

Abundance: Common

Range: Throughout the US, Canada and Europe

<u>Season:</u> April-October <u>Sociality:</u> Eusocial

Typical Flight Distance: 75-140 yd. (70-130 m)

**Nesting:** Soil burrowing in well-drained areas. Found in a wide variety of habitats.

Foraging: Broad generalist

Recommended native plants: Apocynum cannabinum, Erigeron strigosus, Pycnanthemum

tenuifolium, Solidago odora, Euthamia graminifolia

**Key crops pollinated:** Pepper, Strawberry, Tomato, Watermelon



Lasioglossum is a diverse genus

sub-genus Dialictus are likely

of bees found all over the world. Many species of the

active on your property.

What to look for: Short, fine hairs, light/dark brown stripes with some metallic copper, 0.3 in. (0.7 cm)

#### <u>Peponapis pruinosa</u> Squash Bee

Abundance: Not common Range: Throughout US, concentrated on east coast Season: July-September Sociality: Solitary

Typical Flight Distance: 0.5-1 mi. (0.8-1.7 km)

**Nesting:** Soil burrowing in well-drained areas, found wherever there is squash (even urban gardens); sometimes will lay eggs in nests of other bees

Foraging: Specialist

Recommended native plants: N/A Key crops pollinated: Squash *P. pruinosa* is an example of an "oligolectic" bee, or an extreme specialist. It only forages on a single type of plant, squash, the reason for its common name.



What to look for: Hairy yellow shoulders, black and gray stripes, 0.5-0.6 in. (1.2-1.4 cm) (Sue Orrell/ www.pbase.com)



What to look for: Hairy yellow face and shoulders, light and dark brown stripes, 0.8 in. (1.3 cm) (Tom Murray/ www.bugguide.net)

#### Colletes inaequalis

#### Plasterer Bee

Abundance: Common

Range: Throughout eastern US

Season: March-June Sociality: Solitary

Typical Flight Distance: 0.5-1.2 mi. (0.9-2 km)

Nesting: Soil burrowing, found in large aggregations in grassy areas with inorganic soil

Foraging: Broad generalist Recommended native plants: N/A Key crops pollinated: Apple



What to look for: Hairy yellow shoulders, black or dark/reddish brown body, 0.4-0.6 in. (1.0-1.4 cm) (Andrena vicina/www.bugguide.net)

#### Andrena carlini, A. dunningi, A. crataegi, A. regularis, A. carolina, A. milwaukeensis, A. vicina

Abundance: Not common Range: Worldwide Season: March-July **Sociality:** Solitary

Typical Flight Distance: 140-930 yd. (130-850 m)

**Nesting:** Soil burrowing, sometimes found in forests or bogs

Foraging: Generalist/sometimes specialist

Recommended native plants: Apocynum cannabinum; Rosaceae, Brassicaceae, and Ericaceae

families; Aruncus, Ilex, and Vibernums sp.

**Key crops pollinated:** Apple, Blueberry, Strawberry



What to look for: Hairy yellow shoulders, black body, 1 in. (2.3 cm) (Athena Anderson/ www.discoverlife.org)

#### Xylocopa virginica Eastern Carpenter Bee

**Abundance:** Very common Range: Throughout eastern US Season: March-October

**Sociality:** Solitary

Honeybees are not native to North

pollinators in PA and NJ as well as throughout the world. Efforts to support

America, but they are important crop

native bees may help stabilize honeybee

Typical Flight Distance: 5.5-13 mi. (8.8-21 km)

**Nesting:** Look for 0.5 in. circular holes in any wood (seem to prefer soft wood such as pine).

Found in a wide variety of habitats, thrives even in cities and suburbs.

Foraging: Broad generalist

Recommended native plants: Asclepias syriaca, Solidago odora, Pycnanthemum tenuifolium,

Euthamia graminifolia, Cirsium discolor **Key crops pollinated:** Blueberry

#### Apis mellifera European Honeybee

Abundance: Common Range: Worldwide

**Season:** March-November

Sociality: Eusocial

Typical Flight Distance: 0.4-0.8 mi. (0.6-1.3 km) **Nesting:** Only lives in managed hive boxes

Foraging: Broad generalist

**Recommended native plants:** Apocynum cannabinum, Pycnanthemum tenuifolium, Euthamia graminifolia

populations.

Key crops pollinated: Apple, Blueberry, Cranberry, Cucumber, Muskmelon, Squash, Strawberry, Watermelon



Although carpenter bees are often

considered pests, they are effective

pollinators. Their nesting rarely impacts wood's structural integrity, but providing

them from nesting in or near your home.

them with other sources of wood may keep

What to look for: Densely hairy shoulders, distinct 'cinnamon' color with light and dark brown stripes, 0.6-0.75 in. (1.5-1.9 cm)

### The most efficient native bees for top regional fruits and vegetables.12,13

All these bees are good pollinators, but three stars (\*\*\*) indicates a key pollinator for that crop. Supporting a variety of bee species will help maintain reliable pollination of crops season after season. A

Bee Species	Crops	Apple	Blueberry	Cranberry	Cucumber	Muskmelon	Pepper	Squash	Strawberry	Tomato	Watermelon
Andrena (multiple species)		*	**						*		
Augochlora pura						***	**			**	**
Augochlorella striata						***	**		*	**	**
Bombus (multiple species)			*	*		***	*	**		**	***
Bombus impatiens			*	**	**	***	*	**		**	***
Ceratina (multiple species)						*					
Colletes inaequalis		*	**								
Habropoda laboriosa			***								
Halictus confusus							***		*	**	**
Lasioglossum (Dialictus)			*			**	***		**	***	***
Peponapis pruinosa						*		***			*
Xylocopa virginica			**								

Bee importance for crop pollination					
*	Good				
**	Better				
***	Best				



There are two key things that would likely increase support for native bees on PA and NJ farmland:

- Grow recommended native plants that studies have shown are preferred by bees in order to attract more pollinators to your property (see page 6).
- Establish areas of suitable pollinator habitat around the farm. This will allow more bees to nest on your property and encourage their return year after year (see page 7).

The rest of this pamphlet provides guidelines for what you can do to make your farm a bee haven.



### Foraging Needs

Bees feed on nectar and pollen, which come exclusively from flowers. Plant a variety of flowers that will provide bee foraging resources throughout the growing season. This will ensure that at any given time at least some flowers are in bloom and that you will attract a diversity of pollinators. These plants must be close to bee nesting sites (within a bee's flight range, shown on pages 2-4) and sufficiently abundant to support both large and small bees. Larger bees have longer flight distances and so can fly farther to reach food. They also require greater amounts of food (more flowers). Cultivating large clumps of recommended native flowers (shown below) in various areas around your farm will be more effective for attracting bees than growing them all in one spot. Plants with more stars (\*\*\*) are more preferred by the indicated visiting bees. 14

† The USDA-NRCS PLANTS database lists Cirsium discolor, a native field thistle, as potentially weedy or invasive. Though you should not encourage large populations, it is a valuable pollinator foraging resource and can be managed as such. Its seeds are not commercially available.



#### **Nesting Needs**

There are three common bee nesting strategies, those of

centers, rotting wood, and existing cavities in wood. Only



1. Weedy area good for bee nesting

2. Wood nesting bee nest cells



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3. Bumble bees nesting in compost

4. Ground nesting entrance hole

Nest Type	Nesting Needs	What You Can Do					
Ground nesting	<ul> <li>Direct access to soil surface</li> <li>Sunny, well-drained areas with no/sparse vegetation</li> <li>Sloped ground</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Leave sunny, well-drained, south-facing sloped ground undisturbed. Tilling the soil wil destroy any ground nests.</li> <li>Clear most vegetation in these areas (leave some grasses to prevent erosion).</li> </ul>					
Wood nesting	<ul> <li>Twigs and vines with pithy centers</li> <li>Existing holes in wood from other insects</li> <li>Rotting logs and stumps</li> <li>Tree snags</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Leave dead wood in appropriate areas near recommended flowering plants.</li> <li>Increase plants with pithy stems (elderberry, boxelder, raspberry, dogwood, etc.) in areas near crops and native foraging resources. Cut back annually to allow bee access to pithy centers.</li> <li>Build a nest: Tie 10-20 hollow stems or paper straws with one end closed (6-8" long) together into a bundle and place in a protected area about 4' off the ground. Bamboo and reeds are good materials (see image 2 above). Put them out in early spring. Make sure foraging resources are nearby.</li> <li>Build a nest: Drill small holes of diameters ranging from 3/32" to 5/16" and 3" to 6" deep into natural or man-made wood structures (logs, boards, dead wood, stumps, etc.). Drill sloping very slightly upward to reduce water entry into holes.</li> </ul>					
Bumble bees	<ul> <li>Small preexisting cavities in wood or other material</li> <li>Rodent burrows</li> <li>Fallen leaves or other plant matter</li> <li>Grassy areas, meadows</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Minimize mowing in grassy meadows or thickets (see image 1). If mowing is necessary, reduce to once every 3-5 years and only in late fall.</li> <li>Avoid removing excessive amounts of weeds in these areas.</li> <li>Do not exterminate rodents or destroy their nests.</li> <li>Leave potential nesting sites protected (unmowed, untilled) during winter for dormant queens.</li> </ul>					

## What funding sources are available for a bee habitat restoration project on my property?

In order to fund habitat preservation efforts, farmers can tap into resources that have recently been made available by the Food,

resources that have recently been made available by the Food,
Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (otherwise known as the Farm Bill).

Over the next five years \$1.00 inillion will be devoted to pollinator habitat research and conservation through such state level initiatives as the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentives
Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Through these programs farmers could receive annual compensation for investment in pollinator habitat ranging from 75-100% of total costs and foregone income. For more information, see page 8 which details the availability of funds in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and whom to contact.



## Pollinator Habitat Funding Opportunities for Individual Farmers

Program	Mission	Agency	Funding	Priorities	Contract Length	Eligibility and Contact Info.
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	Land retirement program, protects environmentally sensitive land	PA and NJ Farm Service Agency (FSA)	Cost-sharing for 50% of eligible conservation practices, rental payments for long-term conservation	<ul> <li>Wildlife habitat benefits</li> <li>Pollinators are high priority wildlife (under practice CP38)<sup>16</sup></li> </ul>	10-15 years	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=crp  Contact your local USDA Farm Service Agency office to apply
Environmental Quality Initiatives Program (EQIP)	Addresses resource concerns to improve environmental quality	PA and NJ Natural Resources Cons. Service (NRCS)	45-75% of typical costs of implementing the practice	<ul> <li>At-risk species habitat conservation</li> <li>Preservation and management of grasslands for pollinators</li> </ul>	1-10 years (priority given to 1- 3 year projects)	NJ: www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/ programs/eqip PA: www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov /programs/eqip/ PA Incentives Manager: Ed Sanders, 717-237-2201
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)	Promotes restoration of important wildlife habitats	PA and NJ NRCS	60-75% of typical cost of implementing the practice	<ul> <li>In NJ, pollinator         habitat a top priority         for 2009     </li> <li>Habitat development         and management         component encouraged     </li> </ul>	1-10 years (work usually completed 1-3 years)	NJ: www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/ programs/whip/ PA: www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov/ programs/whip Ed Sanders, 717-237-2201

Applications are available at any USDA Service Center, or you can request them to be sent to you by calling your local USDA Service Center.

Note: The NJ Conservation Security Program (not mentioned above) may soon include pollinator conservation language due to the 2008 Farm Bill (www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp).

For more technical or logistical information on funding, growing recommendations for native plants and pollinator habitat restoration, visit the Natural Resources Conservation Service website (www.nrcs.usda.gov) and contact your local NRCS office.

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**Images** 

Pg 6: Elaine Haug @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database (Lobelia spicata, Asclepias syriaca, Pycnanthemum tenuifolium)
Patrick J. Alexander @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database (Apocynum cannabinum)
Jeff McMillian @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database (Erigeron strigosus, Prunella vulgaris Jim Stasz @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database (Scutellaria integrifolia, Verbena hastata) Jim Stasz @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database (Scutellaria integrifolia, Verbena hastata)
Seabrooke Leckie (Solidago dodra)
Thomas Barnes (University of Kentucky) @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS (Agalinis purpurea, Cirsium discolor)
William Justice @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS (Vernonia noveboracensis)
Janet Novak @ Connecticut Botanical Society (Eupatorium maculatum)
Robert H. Mohlenbrock @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database (Euthamia graminifolia) www.botanik.uni-karlsruhe.de/garten/fotos-hassler/ (Potentilla norvegica)

Pg 7: (Clockwise from top right), Rufus Isaacs (Michigan State University, Conserving Native Bees)\_Dennis L. Briggs @ VernalPools.org, Gillian Perry @ flickr.com,

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