

Supporting Native Pollinators in West Eugene

by Krystal Abrams

Native pollinators play a key role in sustaining the framework of food sovereignty, human health and nutrition right here in Oregon. Several studies have shown that wild pollinators are often more efficient than honeybees at pollinating plants. They also visit more plants on average and are stronger pollinators. Though the dramatic loss of honeybees has grabbed headlines in recent years, declines in native pollinator populations may be a more alarming threat to crop yields everywhere.



Beyond Toxics organized an Earth Day work party at Churchill Garden in West Eugene. Photo by Ephraim Payne.

Factory-farming, the use of pesticides and higher average temperatures associated with climate change all pose problems for pollinators and thus the quality of food we grow.

In Eugene alone, over two-thirds of our community resides within a “food desert,” which means that there are either no healthy food options or too few options to meet basic nutritional needs. Lack of good nutrition contributes to poor health.

Protecting native pollinators can help our community increase local, fresh food and resist the corporate takeover of our food system. Since the Industrial Revolution, food production has increasingly become the domain of large corporations that use highly toxic, unsustainable models to produce food. Their methods degrade the natural ecosystems that are needed to support society over the long run.

We have three projects to protect pollinators, build up their habitat and keep bee-killing pesticides away from their food sources. Beyond Toxics has started working with Huerto de la Familia in west Eugene to help build pollinator habitat within low-income food-growing spaces. This vitally important project focuses on helping low-income folks provide their families with proper nutrition while supporting native

bees and butterflies.

We are close to making Eugene Oregon the next Bee City USA. Bee City USA is a program that helps protect

pollinators on public lands. We are also re-introducing the Oregon Pollinator Protection Act in the 2019 state legislature. This bill will restrict the sale of bee-killing neonicotinoids, making farms and home gardens safer for bees to pollinate.

It’s important to recognize that not everyone has the luxury of being able to plant native wildflowers to support pollinators in valuable food-growing spaces. We’re working to bring volunteers out to food deserts to help transform these

spaces into habitat that supports pollinators while educating people about ways they can build fertile soils and preserve heirloom seeds.

Our initial project launched in fall of 2017 with Huerto de la Familia and the folks at Churchill Community Garden, continues to draw local interest and support.



Beyond Toxics staff took a tour of the Huerto de la Familia garden in West Eugene last fall, which started the idea of growing a garden plot set aside to encourage pollinator habitat. Huerto staffer, Alexandra Perez Urbina (back row, 3rd from left) helped lead the tour.

To learn more about this garden project or to volunteer your time, contact Krystal at kabrams@beyondtoxics.org.

Earth Justice Week 2018

by **Mysti Frost**
photos by *Ephraim Payne and Mysti Frost*

This year Beyond Toxics led the way to shape the standard Earth Week into one focused on Environmental Justice. We collaborated with a wide range of local arts and social justice organizations to answer the question, *What is Environmental Justice?* As the week unfolded, we witnessed our community come together to work towards making Eugene a more just and safe place for everyone. From pollinator gardens in West Eugene, to panels on climate change and justice, to providing a platform for front-line communities to speak their truth, every day brought us closer to understanding our role in the Environmental Justice movement. We succeeded in strengthening community relationships with each other and made it a week we will never forget!

Pollinator Garden Preparation - Earth Day



Krystal Abrams, Social Media & Pollinator Projects Manager, led a hearty crew of volunteers in work to create a pollinator-friendly garden in West Eugene.



Environmental Justice Community Organizer Mysti Frost joined volunteers for the work party.

