

The Register-Guard

Eugene gets bee-friendly recognition

By Ed Russo

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Eugene's bee-friendly policies have earned a little buzz.

A Portland-based environmental group dedicated to protecting bees, butterflies and pollinators announced this week that it had given Eugene a Bee City USA designation. Eugene was the 71st city to get the honor from the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

"We should be proud to live in a city that works to protect and support bees," said Krystal Abrams, of Beyond Toxics, a Eugene-based environmental group that helped the city get the designation.

An international decline in bee populations has environmentalists worried about the insects. Five years ago Beyond Toxics and beekeepers urged city government to stop using a neonicotinoid pesticide — suspected of killing honeybees — on downtown flower pots and Laurelwood Golf Course. The city stopped using the pesticide in 2014.

Abrams said Eugene also received the Bee City honorific because it has 10 parks where herbicides are not used. The city uses pesticides sparingly, only when it has to control an outbreak, Abrams said.

A city policy guides the city's parks and open spaces and facilities divisions in controlling weeds and pests on city property. Under the 35-year-old policy, the city is supposed to try to control troublesome plants and pests without herbicides or insecticides. If those methods don't work, low-toxicity pesticides can be used.



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Abrams said the city has helped raise awareness about the importance of protecting bees from pesticides. Some local garden stores stopped selling neonicotinoids after the city's decision to ban their use on city property, she said.

To get the designation, the City Council had to pass a resolution saying, in part, that the city will "support and encourage pollinator habitat creation and enhancement on both public and private land." Encouraged by Councilor Mike Clark, the council approved the resolution on July 23.

"We are going to continue to thinking about bees and figuring out ways to protect them," Abrams said.

The resolution requires the city to have a bee celebration event each year, preferably in the summer.