

HOW TO BUILD A BEE HOUSE

"Bee houses" provide cover and places to raise young for bees. They're easy and fun to make, or can be purchased commercially from several vendors.

The Orchard Mason Bee is a wonderful little creature. It does not live in a nest like other bees; it lives in wooden blocks, but does not drill holes and destroy wooden items like other bees. It uses holes that are already available. The male Orchard Mason Bee cannot sting and the female rarely stings.

How to build a bee house:

1. With drill bits of various sizes (5/16th of an inch works best for Mason bees), simply take some scrap lumber and drill holes 3 to 5 inches deep but not all

the way through the wood block. For example, get a 4 inch by 4 inch piece of wood and drill holes that are 3 and 1/2 inches deep.

2. You can cover the holes with chicken wire to help keep birds away from the bee house.

3. Securely place the bee house on the South side of buildings, fence posts, or trees.

4. Scatter some of the houses through your community. You might find an excellent location to trap some bees and then move them to your location.

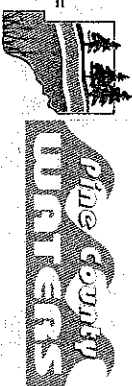
5. DO NOT move bee houses after they are in place

until at least November.
6. DO NOT spray insecticides in or around bee houses.

7. If you chose to build your own bee houses, DO NOT use treated wood.

Be sure to be cautious of the use of insecticides around bees and especially during open bloom. Use products that are recommended, and during times that the bees will not suffer.

For more information, contact The National Wildlife Federation, 11100 Wildlife Center Drive Reston, VA 20190 www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife



ATTRACT BUTTERFLIES

Install native flowering plants- Because many butterfly's and native flowering plants have co-evolved over time and depend on each other for survival and reproduction, it is particularly important to install



native flowering plants local to your geographic area. Native plants provide butterflies with the nectar or foliage they need as caterpillars and adults. Adult butterflies may accidentally mistake a non-native, invasive plant for a good egg-laying site, which could prevent the survival of its offspring. Grow your nectar-producing native plants in sunny areas that are protected from strong winds. The Lady Bird Wildflower Center has lists of recommended native plants by region and state at www.wildflower.org/collections.

POLLINATOR HABITAT

by Julie Lindner, NRCS Acting District Conservationist

What is pollinator habitat, you might ask and why should I care about it?

Creating pollinator habitat is planting or preserving specific plants, trees, and shrubs to increase pollinator species on your property. This is usually achieved through the use of native plants, but certain non-native plants like clover, also provide nectar for pollinators. Native bees, butterflies and dragonflies are pollinators. So are hummingbirds, moths and even bats. As they travel from flower to flower they carry pollen from an anther to a stigma. This allows for fertilization and the production of seed or fruit. If you have a flower or vegetable garden you know the importance of pollination. The more pollinators the more flowers, fruits and vegetables you'll have. Basswood, Birch and Chokecherry are common Minnesota trees that attract pollinators. Shrubs that

are attracted to red, yellow, orange, pink and purple blossoms that are flat-topped or clustered, and have short flower tubes.

Plant for continuous bloom- Butterflies need nectar throughout the adult phase of their life span. Try to plant so that when one plant stops blooming, another begins.

Get them to stay- To ensure that butterflies will take up residence in your habitat rather than just pass through, your garden should include "host plants" that serve as larval (caterpillar) food.

Avoid herbicides and pesticides- These types of lawn care and maintenance products contain chemicals that will kill butterflies and other beneficial insects in both their adult and larval phases.

Provide a place to rest- Butterflies need sun for orientation and to warm their wings for flight. Place flat stones in your garden to provide space for your butterflies to rest and bask in the sun.

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High Bush Cranberry, Nannyberry and Serviceberry, Coneflowers Astors, Butterflyweed and Wild bergamot are just a few of the Forbs or native pollinators in Minnesota that attract pollinator species. Many of these are found in native seed mixtures like the one offered by the Pine SWCD. Planting a variety of trees, shrubs and native wildflowers will ensure that something will be blooming throughout the growing season, which is essential for attracting and keeping pollinators on your property.

Do not use pesticides or herbicides; most will kill pollinators and destroy their habitat. Even natural herbicides and botanical insecticides can harm bees. If pesticides must be used near pollinator habitat, use fast acting, short-residual options, use the smallest amount necessary for control and apply only on a calm evening when most pollinator species are not active. Some benefits of pollinator habitat are: increased plant health and vigor, improved fruit production and overall quality, and increased fruit size. Other benefits include: increased biodiversity and productivity per acre and decreased use of pesticides. Another benefit of providing pollinators with their own habitat is that they are too busy gathering nectar to bother you. According to experts approximately 80% or nearly 1400 crops grown around the world rely on pollinators, and the estimated economic value in the United States alone is as much as 10 billion dollars a year. Around the world, this estimate grows to 3 trillion. Because of this, the senate passed Resolution 530, "Recognizing the importance of pollinators to ecosystem health

and agriculture in the United States and the value of partnership efforts to increase awareness about pollinators and support for protecting and sustaining pollinators.

Some USDA programs offer cost-sharing to help establish or protect native pollinator habitat. The planting must contain a diverse mix of native plants that bloom throughout the growing season, and must remain undisturbed. If seeding is done to establish pollinator habitat, the mixture must contain 15 native species that include a minimum of 5 Forbs (wildflowers) and five native grasses and the planting area must be at least one-half acre in size. For more information contact the NRCS office in Hinckley AT (320) 384-7432, or visit www.pollinator.com



GREEN ACRES/RURAL PRESERVES PROPERTY TAX PROGRAM

The 2009 MN Legislature created the Rural Preserve Property Tax Program (RPPTP) under MS 273.114. In general, this program provides tax relief for preserving undeveloped class 2b rural vacant lands that may be subject to a higher valuation for development or recreational purposes. It also provides a "fix" for 2008 modifications to the Green Acres program that rendered class 2b rural vacant lands ineligible for Green Acres. Landowners have until May 1, 2010 to make decisions about their Green Acres participation. They will then have until May 1, 2013 to complete the transition process to RPPTP.

SWCDs and BWSR were identified in legislation to be involved in the Conservation Management Plan development and approval process.



Conservation Management Plan: Prior to enrollment a landowner must obtain a Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) approved Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the area enrolled in the program. The MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is

designated, under this legislation, to develop the CMP document and the process for approval of the plan. This document shall serve as the state's RPPTP guidance to SWCDs involved.

1. Eligibility for RPPTP will be determined by the County Assessor's office. Landowners should contact that office to answer any questions they may have and to begin the application process.

2. The County Assessor's office will provide the landowner with a map and acreage determination of land eligible for enrollment along with contact information at the SWCD. The landowner shall schedule an appointment to bring this information to the SWCD to initiate the plan development process. The SWCD shall provide each landowner with a list of certified plan writers.

3. The SWCD serves as the approval authority of the CMP.

4. Upon plan approval, two original copies of the approved plan shall be provided to the landowner. The landowner should be instructed to record the restrictive covenant using the form provided by MN Dept. of Revenue. One original copy of the CMP and a copy of recorded covenant shall be provided to the County Assessor for completion of application.

Pine SWCD will be establishing a policy for the CMP's within the next month or two. Please give us a call or stop in and talk to us about the Green Acres and Rural Preserves Programs.

STATE COST SHARE PROGRAM FUNDS AVAILABLE

By Sam Martin, Water Management Specialist

Every year, the Pine Soil and Water Conservation District receives a limited amount of State Cost Share funds to be used to help pay for cost share practices such as critical area stabilization, diversions, field windbreaks, shelterbelts, grass waterways, waste water and feedlot runoff control, filter strips, sediment basins, streambank, shoreland, and road side protection, stripcropping, terraces, and unused well sealing.

If a landowner participates in the State Cost Share Program, up to 75% of the cost of the project can be paid for with cost share funds. The project would be surveyed, designed and construction checked by an engineer and technician that work for the area SWCDs.

We have done many lakeshore and streambank projects, abandoned well sealing, diversions, critical area stabilization, sediment basins and filter strips.

Once a project is completed, it must remain in place for at least ten years. When we have more projects than we can fund, we prioritize the projects determining which will give us the most bang for the environmental buck. If you think you might have a project for our State Cost Share Program, please give me a call at 320-216-4242.

RAIN BARRELS, A GREAT WAY TO UTILIZE RAINWATER

University of Minnesota Extension

Have you ever watched a river of rainwater run down your driveway into the lake or storm sewer? Or even worse, seep into your basement? Collecting roof runoff in rain barrels is a good solution to these problems and it also helps alleviate stressed water systems and conserve limited resources. Rain barrels will help protect our lakes and rivers while saving money on water bills. A rain barrel is any type of container that is placed underneath a shortened downspout, diverting the roof runoff into the rain barrel. The water that is collected can then be stored and used to water your lawn or flowers at a later date. This rain water is better for your flowers and lawn because it is natural. It does not have the chlorine, minerals and chemicals found in city tap water. The water collected is not suitable for human or pet consumption. Due to lack of research, using it to water vegetable gardens is also not recommended. If you are interested in making or purchasing a rain barrel, contact Sam at the Pine SWCD office at 320-216-4242 for an information sheet on rain barrels and a sheet of directions on how to construct a rain barrel.

Pine SWCD's website



www.pineswcd.com
check it out!