

The Great Southeast Pollinator Census

By

Becky Griffin

Calendars are being marked and pollinator gardens are being readied for the 6th Annual Great Southeast Pollinator Census. This community science event takes place each August with this year's dates being August 23rd and 24th. During those date participants venture out to their pollinator garden and for 15 minutes they count the pollinators that land on their chosen pollinator plant. Counters place the pollinators into one of eight categories: carpenter bee, bumble bee, honey bee, small bee, wasp, fly, butterfly/moth, and other insects.



I began this initiative when I was traveling throughout the state as Extension's Community & School Garden Coordinator. I met wonderful gardeners knew plant selection and soil health but were lacking in insect knowledge. At the same time, I was working with educators and finding that many were not educated in entomology while in college and were loath to teach it to their students. I felt the Pollinator Census would be an avenue to not only

provide pollinator population data to researchers but at the same time increase entomological literacy and create lacking sustainable pollinator habitat throughout the state.



Pollinator Habitat at Rock Eagle 4-H Center

This project has grown to include South Carolina, North Carolina, and Florida. The success of the Census is due to the project partners throughout these states and the enthusiasm of the participants. Since its inception, participation has increased over 200% and over 2,500 new sustainable pollinator habitats have been created. It is easy to learn to differentiate between the insect categories and participants usually respond to participating by wanting to increase their pollinator habitat and learn more about the insects.



*West Fannin Elementary School students
count in the Census*

I encourage you to consider participating. I will warn you; it will be hot! So, plan on taking a sweet tea and a lawn chair out to the garden with you as you count. Be forewarned, participating can be addicting! The number one comment that I hear after each Census from new participants is, “I had no idea. I had no idea of the number and diversity of insects that visit my garden!” Visit our project website at <https://GSePC.org> to find out more information. Of course, you can always email me at beckygri@uga.edu. Considering joining our social media at Southeast Pollinator Census Facebook Group and @SoutheastPollinators on Instagram. The project’s motto, “protecting pollinators one count at a time,” means that your counts really do matter!

*Bumble Bees are Important Parts of the
Census*



About the author:

Becky Griffin is University of Georgia (UGA)'s Community & School Garden Coordinator where she works with Extension agents across the state helping create impactful gardens. She is also a Pollinator Health Associate and a Georgia certified beekeeper. Emphasizing the ecosystem of the garden and teaching workshops on beneficial entomology and integrated pest management are important parts of her work. Becky is the coordinator of the Great Southeast Pollinator Census which is a passion project for her.



Becky has been with UGA Extension for over 12 years and enjoys the collaborations and friendships that working with the University brings. Becky represents the Southeastern US region on the Community Seed Network Advisory Panel and sits on the board of directors for The Bee Cause. She is also part of the Southeast Bumble Bee Atlas program.