



## What is the biggest benefit of being a Bee City USA?

I'd say that we are ensuring the survival of our planet. "We help to empower communities to protect the life that sustains us." Projections are that 80% of the food we eat has been aided by pollinators in some way. Pollinators are invertebrates who have no spine; this takes in a huge group of insects and animals; "more than 90% of all living animal species are invertebrates", Britannica Encyclopedia. Just like adding a trillion trees would take care of the ozone issue, ensuring invertebrate survival is crucial to our planet's functioning ecosystems.

Being an organized group with the identity of "Biggest Little Bee City" helps us to build community locally and nationally and become recognized as a specific pro-active group. What helps is having an active, educational and scientific website for fact finding and a listing of partnerships that mutually support each other.

You probably have noticed that when a major climate change happens it affects production in your garden. Last year, the smokiest year I can remember, the smoke shut down photosynthesis and stopped plants from growing but reportedly the ash increased production. We saw an overabundant escalation of tomato and pepper production to the point where we gave away most of the food produced. This helped to support a small restaurant who came over and picked numerous five-gallon buckets of tomatoes and peppers.

Although we were inundated with Alder bugs, I poured Dawn Liquid Soap on the densest areas and blasted it with a jet stream of water. That took care of the issue very quickly. The same goes for the aphids in spring but without the soap. Integrated Pest Management is safer and less harmful than chemicals since you have many options.

Part of the Bee City USA is educating the public about biological diversity of plants (wildflowers) and pollinator species (Nevada has 1000 bee species out of 3600 in the USA). So, that tiny fly you see might just be a Mason Bee or some other bee pollinator that will pollinate much better than a honeybee that is limited by size and distance it flies. Honeybees also memorize where the best flowering plants are and go back to the same areas year after year. These native bees might live in the ground, in a pile of brush, a log, or a hole in something naturally growing. You will not need to pull the frames, or extract honey because they do not produce honey like commercial bees. Their nest you provide, usually hollow tubes or reeds, will need to be cleaned out at the end of fall, soaked in bleach water, dried, and stored until you put them out in the spring. Otherwise, mites and other nasty stuff will use the tubes and potentially infect the bees.

Being part of Bee City USA, affiliated with Xerces Society, means we can network with other members in different states, have training sessions, get help from Pollinator Conservation experts, and get nationwide recognition of our work here in Reno. We can write blog posts, present in webinars, and learn all sorts of science-based information on BeeCityUSA.org and Xerces.org. Each year members write an annual report and share what annual project/s they are working on. Biggest Little Bee City USA (BLBC) has been working for the community since 2019 and was recently approved by Reno City Council thereby finalizing the national certification.

Help Save the Bees Foundation (HSBF), with Ray Hopper's help, has underwritten BLBC and helped us gain this national certification. We are truly thankful for Ray's unending help and his dedication/insight to create HSBF. Carson City Bee City USA's Lyndsay Boyer was very helpful making suggestions when I started up BLBC and TMCC's Bee Campus is new.

-- Barbara Fenne, Chairwoman, Biggest Little Bee City USA