



## If You Plant It, They Will Come

Jeremy Napp, Master Beekeeper, Pollinator Farm Owner

Living among the rolling hills and valleys of the Appalachian Mountains of Pennsylvania never gets old. Watching the landscape change through the four seasons, the shifting colors, the returning birds, the subtle emergence of life, each spring feels almost magical. What is far less enchanting, however, is the steady habitat loss and fragmentation due to agricultural and urban development. As these spaces disappear, the need to intentionally replace them becomes increasingly urgent. Creating safe, connected habitat for pollinators is no longer optional; it is essential.

About 10 years ago, I bought a plot of farmland that had been depleted by modern agriculture. Each year over the past six years, I have added approximately half an acre of pollinator meadow on my farmland. We now have three acres of pollinator meadows and counting. Few experiences have been as rewarding as watching once-simplified ground come alive with insects, birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. While this transformation has been deeply satisfying, it has also highlighted how scarce these habitats have become in and around my hometown. What stood out most was not just what had been restored on my land, but how much opportunity existed elsewhere.



*Pollinator meadow in full bloom on my farm*

That realization led me to look beyond my own property. The company I work for owns several acres of land surrounding its facility, much of it underutilized. I approached the owners with the idea of converting a small portion of the property into pollinator habitat. After sharing photographs of my own meadows and explaining the benefits, they readily

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agreed. The company purchased the seed and covered equipment rental, while I contributed my time, labor, and experience. Over several weekends, I prepared three-quarters of an acre for planting, ensuring the site was properly established before carefully broadcasting a native seed mix selected specifically for local pollinators. Then, we waited.

The first summer exceeded all expectations. The first-year blooms were vibrant and abundant, and the return of pollinators was immediate and unmistakable. As the season progressed and the flowers changed from month to month, something unexpected happened: people noticed. Employees, neighbors, and passersby stopped to look, take pictures, ask questions, and express curiosity. In creating habitat for pollinators, we also created awareness, often among people who had never given much thought to the role habitat plays in sustaining healthy ecosystems.



*New planted meadow*

That small project has since become a catalyst. I have secured commitments from additional property owners to establish new pollinator habitats in the coming spring. My hope is simple: that seeing these spaces in action encourages others to imagine what is possible on their own land. Change happens one person at a time, one property at a time, and ultimately, one square foot at a time.

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