

Habitat Creation and Management for Native Pollinating Insects at the Manhattan Plant Materials Center, Kansas®

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Pollinators are keystone species to which many plants rely on to complete their reproductive lifecycle. Insects are the most numerous group of the pollinators. Some pollinating insects are also considered to be indicator species and can be used to determine ecosystem health. Pollinating insects provide for heterogeneity of the floral gene pool, larger fruit and seed size, and a more even development of fruits or seeds. Bees are often the insect pollinators that are commonly referred to, and they are one of the biggest contributors to pollination, but many other types of insect pollinators are involved in pollinating flora. Due to the role that pollinating insects have in seed production and the increased problems with using domestic honey bees for commercial applications, a great need exists to study and develop better ways to manage native pollinating insects. Pollinating insects will play a vital role in the commercial production of native seed for land reclamation and restoration projects in the future. The increased demand for native plants and native plant seeds for ecological rehabilitation applications increases the need for demonstration projects and research on native insect pollinators and native plant interactions. Projects and studies at the Manhattan Plant Materials Center (PMC) have been implemented to survey for and to create artificial nesting habitat for native pollinating insects that occur at the PMC. Based on the results of these initial surveys and habitat projects, other management may be implemented to target specific species.