

POLLINATORS: OUR TINIEST AGRICULTURAL AMBASSADORS

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Demand for pollinator education is high, presenting a unique chance to reach non-agriculture audiences on important agriculture issues. People are willing to take action to protect pollinators and the agricultural systems that we all depend on.

Situation: Pollinators are declining and scientists are concerned about resulting crop pollination deficits and diminishing native biodiversity. There is also alarm from the general public about threats to pollinators. Misunderstanding exists about the causes of pollinator decline and related agricultural issues. Educating people about pollinators is an opportunity to provide science-based information on a wider array of topics including the economic contributions and ecosystem services of agricultural lands and producers.

Objectives:

- 1) Increase participant knowledge of pollinators and agriculture.
- 2) Encourage participant adoption of Pollinator Protection Practices, participation in citizen science projects and actions that support Florida agriculture.

Methods: The Agent created a Florida Pollinators presentation aimed at the general adult public, covering pollinators, creating pollinator habitats, agricultural crops, the beekeeping industry, and responsible pesticide use. While highlighting pollinator threats, the presentation introduces larger issues like climate change, food security, and the importance of preserving of agricultural and conservation land. The Agent also developed an accompanying “Plants for Pollinators” list and a “Pollination Station” exhibit featuring an interactive trivia game to educate the public at community events.



Results: The Agent taught pollinator awareness to 243 people at seven events (2019-2020). Over 100 people were educated at the pollinator exhibit. Participants in pollinator awareness classes reported taking action as a result of what they learned, including planting pollinator gardens and reducing pesticide use. Formalized evaluation tools were developed to capture program impacts: 1) A pre-post questionnaire to measure knowledge gain 2) A six-month follow-up questionnaire to track Pollinator Protection Practice adoption, citizen science participation, and actions supporting agriculture. Whether planting pollinator habitats, working locally to protect conservation and ag lands that support pollinators, documenting pollinator sightings, or making purchasing decisions that support Florida agriculture, participants are demonstrating that they are willing to take action to protect our valuable pollinators.

