



# **BEE FRIENDLY FARMING<sup>®</sup> HANDBOOK**



**POLLINATOR  
PARTNERSHIP**

Welcome to the Bee Friendly Farming Certified Handbook. Within this document you will find the latest information on Bee Friendly Farming Certified. For any questions, contact the Bee Friendly Farming Team at [bff@pollinator.org](mailto:bff@pollinator.org).



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# BEE FRIENDLY FARMING®



## Purpose

**Bee Friendly Farming® (BFF)** provides guidelines for farmers and growers to promote pollinator health on their lands. BFF strives to set standards for sustainable farming on important concepts like planting pollinator food resources, providing nesting habitat, and incorporating integrated pest management strategies into their operations. By providing a low-cost application and certifications via second party or third party growers can spend valuable time and money getting plants and seeds in the ground to support pollinators.





## History

Bee Friendly Farming® was acquired by Pollinator Partnership in 2013 at the fifth anniversary of its existence. BFF was originally founded by Kathy Kellison in 2008 through Partners for Sustainable Pollination in order to work with growers to promote and provide pollinator habitat in agricultural landscapes and to allow honey beekeepers to partner with landowners to find resting spots for commercial colonies. Pollinator Partnership has continued to expand and grow BFF into the program it is today. A Taskforce of the **North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC)**, which includes scientists and farmers, meets monthly to oversee the program.

Pollinator Partnership is dedicated to further expanding and developing this program and supporting members in providing habitat for pollinators. Originally, the goal of BFF was to incorporate as many acres as possible and manage them responsibly to welcome and sustain bees and other pollinators. It was used to raise awareness in the consumer of the importance of the efforts of responsible producers. Although this basic goal has not changed in the long history of BFF, the program has been refined, improved, and expanded to embrace a variety of approaches to responsibly support pollinators.



# Bee Friendly Farming® and Bee Friendly Gardening



In 2022, The Bee Friendly Farming® program was retooled to form two distinct programs- Bee Friendly Farming (BFF) and Bee Friendly Gardening (BFG). These programs provide avenues for participation throughout a variety of landscapes and goals. Each program has its own purposes, requirements, and benefits.

**BFF (Bee Friendly Farming)** is most appropriate for farming operations that have worked to install and/or maintain pollinator habitat on their properties. It has a rigorous set of standards and requires the most stringent compliance while allowing the use of the BFF logo in marketing materials and websites (after approval by Pollinator Partnership of the text) to those whose diligence is authenticated and rewarded through certification.

**BFG (Bee Friendly Gardening)** is designed for home and community members that maintain pollinator habitat and management practices. This effort is a self-registration membership that builds a community of active gardeners who want to create and maintain pollinator habitat. The BFG movement is helping inform smart landscape decisions and brings the latest science to landscapes across the North American continent and around the world. Like Bee Friendly Farming, Bee Friendly Gardening inspires the creation of habitat on the land and the management practices that keep habitat safe and supportive for pollinators. While these programs are designed to encourage responsible practices on different landscapes, they also work under the unifying goal of protecting and preserving pollinator habitat and health.



## Bee Friendly Farming Certified

The BFF flagship certification has been revamped and redesigned to highlight and support farms, orchards, vineyards, ranches, and other commercial land-use operations that promote and support pollinator health. By becoming Bee Friendly Farming® Certified, the grower helps preserve and protect pollinator populations by implementing positive, incremental, substantiated changes on agricultural landscapes. Each Bee Friendly Farming® Certified farm is an essential part of keeping pollinators healthy and the food supply abundant, and receives use of our Bee Friendly Farming® logo (upon use approval by Pollinator Partnership) and can be featured on the Pollinator Partnership blog for product promotion. The extent of logo use is dependent on method of verification.

BFF Certification can be achieved via either second or third party verification. The standards for certification remain the same across these two systems, however the means of verification are accomplished differently.



Reyn Akiona







## Second-party vs. Third-party Verification



**Second-party verified** programs allow the standard-owner to conduct verification. Between 2020 and 2023, Pollinator Partnership certified over 373,000 acres of farmland across over 750 farms through the second-party program. These farmers manage over 88,000 acres of temporary and permanent pollinator forage and habitat - most of which did not exist prior to 2020. Growers provide on-site photos, maps, records, and an application questionnaire which are reviewed by Pollinator Partnership to allow farmland to achieve certification. When necessary, BFF team members will reach out to the applicant for follow up information. Before certification can be awarded, all criteria must be verified.

In 2023, Pollinator Partnership launched a **third-party verified** option for the Bee Friendly Farming Certified program. This option supplements the widely adopted BFF program to meet sustainable sourcing requirements from global brands and retailers. Keeping with the BFF philosophy, this option was developed closely with farmers, brands, and sustainability partners to ensure effectiveness for farmers, brands, consumers, and pollinators. The standards of BFF Certification have not changed. This option has been developed in partnership with and overseen by **Where Food Comes From (WFCF)**. WFCF will provide both remote and on-farm audits to ensure compliance with the standards, as well as verification of traceability and chain of custody practices for brands and retailers. WFCF will handle all data collection and verification of the standards. For more information, [download the Third - Party Certification Manual](#)



# BEE FRIENDLY FARMING® CERTIFIED



One of our goals at Pollinator Partnership is to provide science-based resources and expertise that make incremental changes to land-use practices. Our criteria for BFF Certification is established on scientific principles necessary for pollinator habitat. The Bee Friendly Farming program highlights and supports farming operations that set the standard for pollinator health management. The program is built on four criteria that support all pollinators: providing diverse forage for pollinators, providing and managing nesting habitat, providing clean drinking water, and developing mindful pest management programs. For more information on the scientific support and additional benefits these provisional resources provide, see the Science Corner, linked in the additional resources section of this handbook.



Cody Wilson

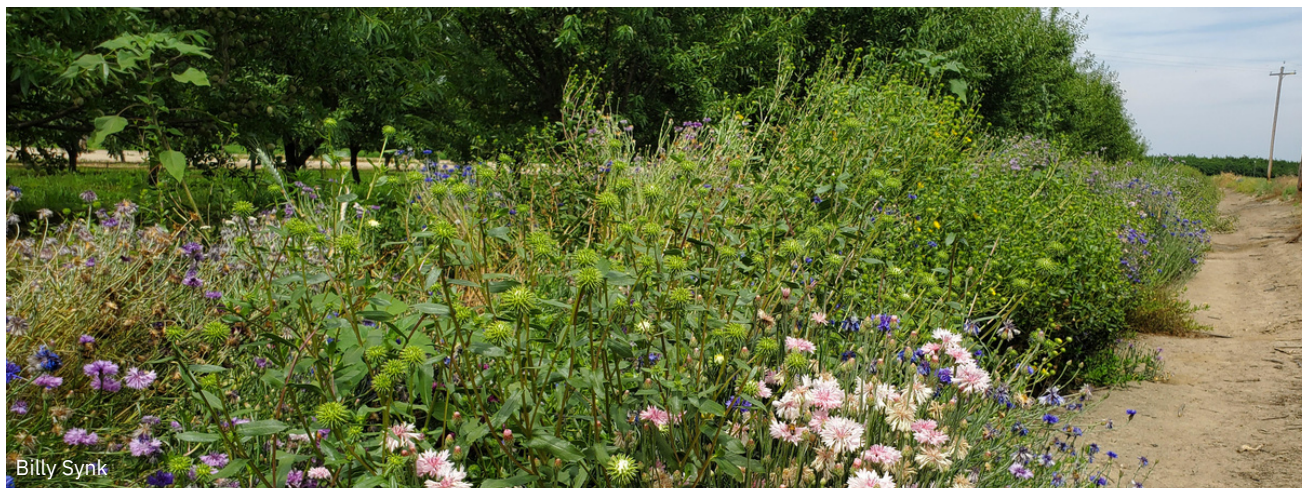


# Criteria for Certification

## Forage

**1. Offer forage providing good nutrition for bees on at least 3% of land. Forage includes cover crops, if they are left to bloom.**

Pollinators require year round resources and habitat. By planting a diversity of flowering plants that produce nectar and pollen, we can support our pollinators year round. Calculated percentage of forage provided cannot include crops or production.



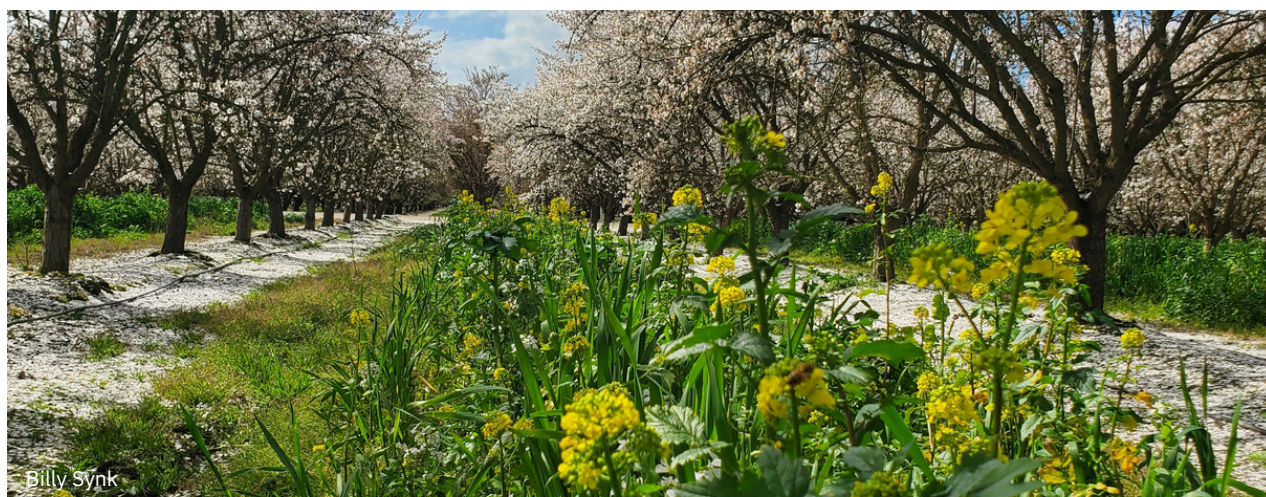
Billy Synk

Insectary strip along bee friendly orchard

**2. Provide bloom of different flowering plants throughout the growing season, from early spring to late autumn.**

There is no minimum land coverage for seasonal bloom. During the growing season, it is important to provide pollinators with alternate food sources that offer a complete diet. Both commercial honey bees and native pollinators benefit when provided with diverse food sources.

Flowering hedgerows or trees, insectary strips, and cover crops are just a number of ways pollinator forage can be incorporated into your farm location that can be counted towards your certification requirements.



Billy Synk

Pollinator friendly cover crop in orchard



# Criteria for Certification

## Habitat

**3. Provide permanent habitat for nesting through features such as, but not limited to hedgerows, natural brush, buffer strips, or undisturbed bare ground.**



Billy Synk  
Establishment of hedgerow along Bee Friendly Farm

## Water

**4. Offer clean water for bees, if not inhibited by government-mandated water restrictions.**

In large scale commercial farming operations, it is important to provide clean water for pollinators. Irrigation canals, holding ponds, lakes, or natural bodies of water can count for certification.



Billy Synk  
Irrigation canal providing water for pollinators

# Criteria for Certification

## IPM

### **5. Utilize Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in efforts to reduce or eliminate the use of chemicals.**

Many insecticides negatively impact pollinators and have led to a dramatic decline in insect populations over the last century. With this in mind, it is important to develop IPM programs that take into consideration the farmer's needs and pollinator health. BFF Certified farmers are expected to practice IPM potentially reducing or eliminating the use of chemicals.



Cody Wilson

Owl box installed along vineyard for pest management

## Fees

### **6. Pay the annual certification fee.**

In order to support the BFF program, there is an annual certification fee. This fee accompanies logo-use. Larger growers are encouraged to contribute an additional donation with increasing acreage.



Cody Wilson





Cody Wilson

## Integrated Pest Management

One of our goals at Pollinator Partnership is to provide science-based resources and expertise that make incremental changes to land-use practices. The Bee Friendly Farming program highlights and supports farming operations that set the standard for pollinator health management.

One of the keystones of the program is working with farmers to develop Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plans that consider pollinator health, while meeting the goals of the farmer. While each of the fundamental aspects of IPM play an important role in optimizing management of pests, careful consideration of pollinator health should be taken in each of these steps to support pollinators without limiting efficacy of pest management strategies.

### **The Bee Friendly Farming® Certified application focuses on the main principles of IPM:**

- Pest monitoring and identification
- Decision making based on monitoring and economic thresholds
- A multi-faceted approach that combines chemical, physical, biological, and cultural control methods
- Prevention of infestations
- Evaluation and improvement of management strategies
- Resistance management



The **BFF Certified** application requires adoption of IPM information on each of the IPM principles.

**1. Pest monitoring and identification:** Proper identification and monitoring of pests is vital to understand potential mitigation of any possible pest infestations. This series of questions asks for detailed information about how monitoring occurs, by whom, where the information for identification is coming from (extension guidelines, etc.), and if records are stored. This informs management decisions that might affect pollinators.



**2. Decision making based on monitoring and thresholds:** Management decisions should be based on proper monitoring which informs when the cost of pest treatment justifies the potential crop losses. Models are commonly used to help make decisions about the timing of management practices. These can be based on initial trap catches and weather data. By using these types of models, growers can make science-based decisions in developing management plans. This is important because it ensures that growers are applying management strategies at the proper time and avoiding any unnecessary applications, reducing pesticide exposure to pollinators.



Anthony John

**3. A multi-faceted approach that combines chemical, physical, biological, and cultural control methods:** IPM benefits from a combination of management approaches that can use different modes of action and strategies, taking advantage of physiological, ecological, and behavioral characteristics of the target pests. These non-pesticide approaches reduce potentially toxic exposure to pollinators. Methods of applying chemicals are also important in mitigating exposure to pollinators. Growers are required to use a multi-faceted approach that combines physical, biological, chemical, and cultural control methods and are required to demonstrate which management strategies they are implementing.

**4. Prevention of infestations:** An important aspect of IPM is the principle of avoiding potential infestations. Small steps can be taken to mitigate outbreaks, many of which directly benefit pollinators. Growers are required to practice at least 2 preventative measures.





**5. Evaluation and improvement of management strategies:** Many of these principles can and may need to be adjusted as seasons change. Adapting farming practices to new methods, changes in the environment, or emerging pests are essential to developing impactful IPM programs.



**6. Resistance Management:** Pest populations can develop resistance to specific pesticides through continued use of the same Mode of Action (MoA). Alternating MoAs, applying at appropriate rates and timings, calibrating equipment, and many other techniques can all help prevent resistance evolution. A passing BFF application will demonstrate the use of at least one resistance management technique recommended by the Insecticide Resistance Action Committee (IRAC).





At **Bee Friendly Farming®**, we understand how complex and important IPM is to our members. We believe that these key principles provide the growers a framework to not only protect their livelihoods, but incorporate pollinator health and awareness. We also understand that practices and situations change from year to year, and we continue to listen and adapt to the needs of our members and pollinators.



# BFF Application Process

In 2023, Bee Friendly Farming launched their tailored account system. Through this portal, growers can submit a new application for farm certification, edit their profile information, make changes to habitat and farm information for review, download and print approved certificates at will, and readily access payment information. Create an account and submit an application at the [BFF login page](#).

**Once an account has been created, growers will be prompted to submit a BFF application. In order to verify the pollinator habitat on your farm, the following documents and information are required:**

-  Photos of your
  - Habitat
  - Forage
  - Clean water provided for the bees
-  List of non-cropped, flowering plant species provided for the bees forage.
-  A farm map with detailed information including habitat, forage, and water locations clearly labeled.
-  Details on your operations IPM strategies.

**To upload additional photos, maps, and pertinent material, email [bff@pollinator.org](mailto:bff@pollinator.org)**

**When necessary, BFF team members will reach out for necessary follow up information. Before certification can be awarded all information must be verified. Certification decisions will be delivered 4-6 weeks after submission of all necessary documents and information.**



Billy Synk



## Certification Bundling and Partnerships

Proof of current good standing in other accepted certifications will allow you to bypass significant portions of the application form. American Tree Farm System, California Almond Stewardship Platform, California Certified Sustainable Winegrowing, California Certified Organic Farmers, Fish Friendly Farming, LIVE, Bee Better Certified, EU Organic Certified, Certified Wildlife Friendly for Pollinators, USDA Certified Organic, and Sustainable Forestry Initiative are all certifications that will help expedite your application process. If your certification is not an available option in the application, please reach out to [bff@pollinator.org](mailto:bff@pollinator.org) for more information or to have it considered.

## Annual Programmatic Review

BFF undergoes an internal annual review and updates to guarantee that the program is inlined with the most up to date science and issues being faced by pollinators and farmers. We welcome feedback from our members and the larger scientific community. These modifications are discussed with the Agriculture and Pollinators Taskforce and if adopted, go into effect on the next certification and/or compliance cycle.

**Pollinator Partnership reserves the rights to audit any certified growers at any time and may require additional information with up to date standards.**





Billy Synk

## 3-Year Compliance

- Once growers have completed 3 years of BFF certification, they will be required to complete a 3-Year Compliance Form. The compliance form follows the exact same process as your initial application for certification and will allow you to show us how you are continuing to help pollinators, express any changes to your operation over the last 3 years, and ensure that you receive continued recognition for your accomplishments.
- Preparation of maps photos, and IPM and habitat operation information is recommended for quick and efficient submittal of the 3-Year Compliance Form. A checklist with the necessary information required for a successful 3-Year Compliance application submission can be found [here](#).
- Submission of all required documentation and associated Compliance Form are due one month prior to the anniversary of your certification. This process should take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete when the proper documents have been previously prepared.
- 3-Year Compliance Forms will be reviewed by the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) Agriculture and Pollinators Task Force and BFF staff. 6% of farms will be required to have a remote review with one of the Task Force members.

## BFF Application Fees

The BFF second-party verification program requires an annual certification fee of \$45.00 USD due yearly on the grower's anniversary date of certification. An additional advanced acreage donation is recommended according to the chart below:

Acreage	Annual Renewal Fee	Recommended Annual Advanced Acreage Donation
<100	USD 45	N/A
100-500	USD 45	USD 90
500 - 1,000	USD 45	USD 180
1,000 - 5,000	USD 45	USD 270
5,000 - 10,000	USD 45	USD 360
> 10,000	USD 45	USD 450

Growers can submit their annual certification fee via PayPal, check, or bank transfer. PayPal users have the option to establish a recurring payment system that will automatically charge the grower the annual certification fee every year on their date of certification. This feature can be initiated by the grower and is completely optional.

In the event of a missed payment, certification will remain invalid until payment is received. In certain cases, the grower will have to submit a new BFF application in order to renew their certification.



### Note for Third- Party Verified Program

The application process, fee structure, and verification requirements are unique to this program. For more information, please review the [Third- Party program manual](#).



## Benefits of BFF® CERTIFICATION



- BFF logo use
  - The use of the BFF logo on products is reserved for third-party verified producers only.
  - Logo use on marketing and promotional material can be used by any certified growers, pending logo use agreement signature and approval by Pollinator Partnership.
- Sustainable sourcing and consumer demand for BFF CERTIFIED products
- Access to BFF team for support, including plant suggestions, connection to sourcing, site visits etc. These recommendations are built on the best science for both pollinators and your crop
- Access to grants
- Connections to corporate sponsors and partners
- Membership to a network of like-minded growers
- Access to branded hats, signs, etc. on website store
- Monthly newsletter, blog, website, other features to learn from and be featured in
- Feedback survey
- Complete privacy policy for data usage; farmers can feel comfortable sharing information with BFF Certified.



# LOGO USE AGREEMENT



**Logo use is restricted to marketing and promotional material for BFF second-party verified growers. We encourage our Certified growers to promote their participation in the program. On-pack logo use is exclusive to BFF third-party verified growers. Licensing fees apply to the end product that displays the BFF logo. Chain of custody and traceability will be verified by the third-party auditor.**

**Contact [bff@pollinator.org](mailto:bff@pollinator.org) to receive a logo use agreement.**







## Checklist for Application to become Bee Friendly Farming® CERTIFIED

It should take less than 45 minutes to fill out and submit online if you use the checklist below to prepare the information you will need:

- Proof of current good standing in other accepted certifications (CASP, Live Certified, Bee Better Certified, USDA Certified Organic, among others). Uploading these files will allow you to bypass significant portions of the form. If your certification is not an available option in the application, please reach out to [isaac@pollinator.org](mailto:isaac@pollinator.org) for more information or to have it considered.
- A list of all known plant species on your farm that provide forage for bees and other pollinators
- Images of your forage habitat
- Images of your clean water sources
- Images of potential bee nesting habitat
- Farm map file(s) (PNG, PDF, shapefiles, KML/KMZ, etc.) that shows a clearly defined property line of the area being certified and includes boundaries and labels for each ecological infrastructure (temporary floral resources, permanent floral resources nesting habitat, water sources). Include acre counts for each delineated area.
- Pest management protocol, including monitoring/identification practices, decision making steps, prevention techniques, intervention (application conditions, drift management, etc.), evaluation, and resistance management. Create a PayPal account if you do not already have one. (Please reach out to [bff@pollinator.org](mailto:bff@pollinator.org) if you need to use another payment method.)

You are ready to fill out your certification application. Be sure to allow the form access to your location when prompted, and enter your farm's primary phone number to make future compliance forms much easier; this information is how you will retrieve your application data.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  See [Farming Resources](#) for additional information on how to effectively incorporate pollinator habitat in and around your farming operation.
-  Visit [Grants | Pollinator.org](#) for potential funding opportunities for your pollinator projects hosted by Pollinator Partnership.
-  Utilize Pollinator Partnership's [Ecoregional Planting Guides](#) for a tailored selection of plants for pollinators specific to your ecoregion.
-  Visit the [Document Hub](#) for additional resources to aid your BFF endeavors such as the BFF Third-party Verification Manual, BFF IPM template, and more.
-  Use the [Bee Precaution Pesticide Ratings](#) for guidance on how to avoid and reduce the potential for bee poisoning.
-  Get free cover crop seed through [Project Apis m. Seeds for Bees Program](#)
-  Visit [USDA Farm Service Agency](#) and [Natural Resource Conservation Service](#) for financial assistance opportunities to fund your pollinator habitat efforts.
-  Utilize [Best Management Practices for pollinator habitat in CA](#) for aid in habitat installment.
-  Utilize the [Almond Board of California Cover Crop Best Management Practices](#).
-  Visit our [Science Corner](#) for a literature review on the framework for our BFF Certified criteria.



Cody Wilson



