



Casa Campo

A Blurring Between Nature & Architecture

Belinda & Paul Field, Homeowners & BFG Members

We are all individually surrounded by outwardly expanding circles of support that we can provide for nature. These circles of support start at home and extend outwards to the furthest reach of global missions. The Pollinator Partnership illustrates this with their [Bee Friendly Gardening program](#).

In 2020, my husband and I started with the circle closest to us. Having outgrown our small cottage in East Dallas, we decided to replace it with a modern home. Our property drops 12-14 ft in the back to a creek, is heavily wooded, and supports an unusual amount of wildlife and pollinators for an urban setting. We had nurtured the landscape since 2003, trying as much as possible to respect our ecosystem.

Our new home provided an interesting challenge: elevate our support of nature while also minimizing the structure's impact on its surroundings. Our solution - infuse nature directly into the program. Fortunately, we had several of the skill sets needed to materialize our vision. My husband, Paul, is an architect and builder and I am a gardener, hobbyist beekeeper and nature enthusiast. We also used various educational resources to help materialize our vision.



The result is a home immersed in its surroundings. The 3-story structure is partially submerged to maximize square footage while minimizing its footprint. Building materials were kept natural, allowing the house to recede into the background and keep nature center stage.

Minimal interior walls and expansive glass panes allow natural light and outside views throughout almost the entire house.

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A silent geothermal heating and cooling system allows the sounds of nature to be at the forefront of the audio experience while reducing energy consumption. Rainwater collection helps with irrigation and several water sources (pond, pool and creek) ensure year-round water availability. Finally, our biggest upgrade in pollinator support - the upper layers of the house are layered with native pollinator plantings to offer up a wide variety of blooming Texas wildflowers, vines, cacti, wild grasses, sedums, and shrubs almost year-round. In short, the line between structure and nature was beautifully blurred.



Pollinators responded well to our offering, and a diverse range of species can be seen helping themselves to a buffet of blooms. Between drought tolerant native pollinator plantings, native host plants and trees, zero landscape chemicals, multiple running water sources, native bee boxes, and the practice of leaving fallen leaves year-round resulted in an explosion of pollinators. Two locally adapted Varroa Sensitive Hygiene honey bee colonies

were added to the 2nd floor to join in the pollinator highway that now surrounds our home.

We have counted more varieties of birds, butterflies, moths, beetles, wasps, and bumblebees in the last 2 years than the prior 18 years on the same property. This increase in pollinators speaks volumes about what can happen when you make a few environmentally supportive upgrades. After becoming members of Bee Friendly Gardening, we joined iNaturalist to start the process of documenting our pollinators.

Finally, our favorite outcome of all...the awareness of and desire to contribute to pollinator support has captivated our neighbors as they witness the beauty of our swallowtail butterflies, bees, bumble bees, and hummingbirds flitting, buzzing, and flying from flower to flower. And with our neighborhood engagement, we expanded from supporting nature at our home to supporting nature in our local community as we share our experience and learnings with others.



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