

Boy Scout Pollinator Garden

Carter Kunz

My name is Carter Kunz, and I am a Scout in Troop 111 based in Arlington, VA. After earning the rank of Eagle Scout in May 2024, I dedicated the past year-and-a-half to completing my second Distinguished Conservation Service Award (DCSA) project. The DCSA is Scouting's highest conservation honor, earned by only about 1,200 Scouts in more than 100 years. Its rarity is due to the difficulty and time required: it requires the scout to plan, lead, and document two major conservation projects focused on topics like invasive species control, pollinator habitats, or water conservation, including pre- and post-project monitoring to measure impact.



For my second project, I decided to create a pollinator garden in a plot filled with invasive species (pictured at left) at the local public park next to an elementary school. While difficult to distinguish in the photo, the around-4,000 sqft. plot was filled with invasive species such as porcelain berry, mugwort, and creeping thistle.

While it did contain some native plants, the majority of them were not pollinator friendly. Additionally, the lack of pollinators in the area was apparent.

After hours of research, planning, and meeting with landscape architects and nursery owners over the winter, spring and summer of 2024, I was able to finally start the project. Starting in late August 2024, I rallied family, friends, scouts, and neighbors to help with the first stage of the project: removing the vast majority of the plants. This involved four full days of manually digging out the unwanted plants and their roots with mattocks, hand picks, and shovels. A wheelbarrow brigade was constantly going, hauling mulch to the site and hauling away heaps of plant debris. We ended with a large, cleared plot covered in mulch and devoid of any



unwanted plants. About a month later, the planting phase began. Using funds raised through GoFundMe and generous donations from nurseries and neighbors, we bought around 300 plants ready to plant in the garden. These pollinator-friendly plants included shrubs, trees, grasses, and



perennial wildflowers, such as Narrow-Leaf Mountain Mint, Orange Cone Flower, various Milkweeds, and New York Iron Weed, as well as a few clumps of native aster not removed from the plot during the removal process.

To make planting easier, I created a plant map of the whole garden that showed where each plant grouping would be placed. We then placed flags where each plant would go using little flags. This made it easy for the volunteers to know where to place each plant. The whole planting process also took four full days to complete but was thankfully much easier than the grueling removal process.

I returned to the garden in early spring and was overjoyed to see that almost all of the plants were blooming. However, despite the extensive removal of all unwanted plants and roots from the plot the previous fall, the resilient seed bank in the soil resulted in weeds and invasives springing up everywhere. Thanks to multiple weeding sessions in the garden throughout the spring, we were able to fully clear the garden of all the weeds and invasives.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2025, the number and variety of pollinators have noticeably increased as compared to the previous year. I found some pollinator-focused signs to add to the garden to help educate the neighbors who walk by. The park steward told me that he is excited to show the elementary school kids the garden and teach them about pollinators once school starts this fall. I am very proud of my project and consider it a success!

