

Pollinator Partnership and Pollinator Steward Certification

Wow. All I can say is that the [Pollinator Steward Certification](#) program has rocked my world. I am basically a solitary, native bee personality – totally happy working close to home and avoiding group interaction. Completing the assigned project in my yard has been natural and easy, and it is an ever-expanding process, with more and more native plants being added each spring and fall.

The second project – educational outreach – seemed easy if I could avoid speaking to a group. I reached out to our city parks director about rehabilitating a long-neglected garden at a nearby park. Of course, the idea was instantly approved by the park's director, and that began the task of recruiting and managing volunteers. What was I thinking? This involves groups and speaking to people and telling them what to do and how to do it. Eek! Here comes the nail-biting learning curve. However, I learned that there is something healing about the shared spirit of working together to help create habitat for bugs. I've discovered this in the process of pushing myself far beyond my comfort level.

The pollinator project is on our greenbelt, and regular daily walkers were curious, interested, and supportive. People donated seeds and offered kind words of encouragement. We had great community involvement with two large group volunteer days to accomplish heavy cleanup. My proudest moment was when I listened to a volunteer explain the relationship between milkweed and the lifecycle of the monarch butterfly to a passerby, much like a docent would do.

My husband, a friend, and I spent September and October weeding and repairing the broken drip irrigation and planting plugs, small trees, and shrubs. Caging was a significant expense, but absolutely necessary because of the deer. All of this was self-funded. Ironically, while volunteers were working hard to create new habitat for pollinators, three holes of a disc golf course were being constructed in the middle of 2.9 acres of monarch breeding habitat in the same park, despite pleas from the community to relocate. That is another chapter in this story.

Spring is now here and the shrubs and trees that were planted in the fall are beginning to bud. The milkweeds we planted will soon emerge. Over the winter I worked with the city to expand the project to a larger area and wrote a grant for funding. The city agreed to prep the ground and install irrigation in the new, larger area. Yesterday we received notification that we've been awarded a \$10,000 grant! Plugs are on the way this month!

None of this would have happened without Pollinator Partnership and their Pollinator Steward Certification program. I'm proudly using the Pollinator Steward Certification stamp on all of my emails with the city and other agencies. Just like pollination produces seeds, the Pollinator Steward program produces results and cultivates friendships.

Linda Popelka, Certified Pollinator Steward

Pocatello, ID

The Pollinator Steward Certification program empowers people with the scientific know-how to make a real difference for pollinators, people, and the planet. Learn more and sign-up for updates for next year's program by clicking [here](#)!



Cleaning up the park: a before and after