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National Pollinator Garden Network Launches Million Pollinator Garden Challenge

WASHINGTON, DC (June 3, 2015) – In an unprecedented collaboration, dozens of conservation and gardening organizations joined together today to form the National Pollinator Garden Network and launch a new nationwide campaign – the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge. Designed to accelerate growing efforts across America, the Network is launching the Challenge in support of President Barack Obama's call to action to reverse the decline of pollinating insects, such as honey bees and native bees, as well as monarch butterflies. Representatives of the Network joined First Lady Michelle Obama today at the White House garden, which includes a section dedicated to support pollinators, to formally launch the Challenge.

The National Pollinator Garden Network collectively represents nearly one million active gardeners and 15,000 schoolyard gardens. The Network is challenging the nation to reach the goal of one million additional pollinator gardens by the end of 2016. The Network will work to provide resources for individuals, community groups, government agencies and the garden industry to create more pollinator habitat through sustainable gardening practices and conservation efforts.

As noted in President Obama's 2014 Presidential Memorandum on Pollinator Health and recently released *National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators*, federal action combined with private sector partnerships and strong citizen engagement can restore pollinator populations to healthy levels. Pollinator gardens provide one way to reverse that decline by offering food, water, cover and places to raise young for honey bees, native bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinators.

To tackle these challenges, the Network is rallying hundreds of thousands of gardeners, horticultural professionals, schools, and volunteers to help reach a million pollinator gardens over the next two years. Any individual can contribute by planting for pollinators and joining this effort to provide a million pollinator gardens across the United States. Every habitat of every size counts, from window boxes and garden plots to farm borders, golf courses, school gardens, corporate and university campuses. Everywhere we live, work, play and worship can, with small improvements, offer essential food and shelter for pollinators.

"If we all work together — individuals, communities, farmers, land managers, and local, state, and federal agencies — we can ensure that every American child has a chance to enjoy the beauty of creatures like bees, monarch butterflies, and hummingbirds," said Collin O'Mara, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation. "By joining forces with the National Pollinator Garden Network on the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge, the National Wildlife Federation and our affiliates are amplifying these collective efforts to address the growing threats affecting so much of America's treasured wildlife."

"Bees are vital in seed and agriculture production, as well as general ecosystem health, and ensuring their wellbeing is a priority," said Andrew W. LaVigne, president and CEO of the American Seed Trade Association. "ASTA's diverse membership includes companies with expertise in the production of seed for pollinator forage and health. We look forward to working in tandem with the White House and members of the National Pollinator Garden Network to increase the outreach and education of this important initiative."

“National Garden Bureau supports gardens of all types, done by any type of gardener for any reason and gardening for the health of pollinators is a priority for NGB and our members,” said Diane Blazek, executive director of the National Garden Bureau. “We are thrilled to be part of the National Pollinator Garden Network and look forward to the day we reach one million pollinator gardens registered in the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge.”

“Horticulture has a huge opportunity to be part of the solution to the threats facing pollinators, and we look forward to working together to meet the challenge,” said Michael Geary, president and CEO of AmericanHort.

“All pollinators are critical to our ecosystems, as well as our Nation’s economic well-being. We know that honey bees alone contribute over $15 billion to U.S. food production,” said Jennifer Tedeschi, COO at National Gardening Association. “NGA has worked for over 40 years to educate people of all ages about the personal and community benefits of gardening. We are thrilled to be partnering with so many experts in conservation, ecosystems, and horticulture to bring this challenge to the American people and engage them in protecting pollinators thereby protecting our environment and food systems.”

“Pollinators are critical to our survival. Our member gardens preserve and restore existing pollinator habitats as well as create new places where millions of Americans can appreciate the indispensable role of plants and their allies,” said Casey Sclar, executive director of the American Public Gardens Association. “We are proud to work with our network collaborators and federal agency partners on this important effort.”

“Pollinator Partnership has worked for pollinator health for nearly two decades, and we are thrilled to see this seminal moment arrive; thanks to the National Pollinator Garden Network, an extraordinary collaboration has been formed to support every American in providing the help that pollinators desperately need in every landscape,” said Laurie Davies Adams, executive director of the Pollinator Partnership. “What a profound and important opportunity this is - we are coming together as a nation to share our landscapes with bees and butterflies; each of us can support the very creatures that support us every day.”

Full list of National Pollinator Garden Network partner organizations:

- America In Bloom
- American Horticultural Society
- American Public Gardens Association
- American Seed Trade Association
- American Society of Landscape Architects
- AmericanHort
- Captain Planet Foundation
- Home Garden Seed Association
- Keep America Beautiful
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
- Monarch Watch
- National Environmental Education Foundation
- National Gardening Association
- National Garden Bureau
- National Garden Clubs, Inc.
- National Recreation and Park Association
- National Wildlife Federation
- North American Butterfly Association
- Pollinator Partnership
- Society of American Florists
- USDA People’s Garden
- Wild Ones
- Wildlife Habitat Council

- Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

Learn more at www.millionpollinatorgardens.org and join the discussion on Twitter through the hashtag #PolliNation.

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