

Bee Better Certified: Creating Better Places for Bees

Sandy Welches, MGV 2005



Behind the Bee

The Xerces Society developed Bee Better Certified to promote pollinator conservation in agriculture. The Bee Better production standards are science-based and field-tested, guaranteeing that the actions farmers take actually improve pollinator well-being. Third-party verification from Oregon Tilth ensures that the certification process is transparent and trustworthy.

Dear pollinator-loving Master Gardeners, my husband and I are members of *the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation*. I'd like to share this amazing partnership announced in the society's August 2017 newsletter.

"We realize that, because farming encompasses about half of the U.S. land base, we must work with farmers if we want to provide a long-term future for pollinators. Xerces works closely with growers to protect and restore high-quality habitat on their farms. The dedication of these individuals is inspiring. They are often motivated to help bees simply because it's the right thing to do, a way to improve their land for the future.

Thanks to our new program, farmers like these now have a way to be recognized for their efforts.

Launched in June, Bee Better Certified is the first third-party farm certification program focused specifically on pollinator conservation. *The goal of Bee Better Certified is to give bees a healthy place to live.* But the program also celebrates farmers for their conservation work, allows businesses to market products using a packaging seal that demonstrates that they work with conservation-minded growers, and gives consumers confidence in knowing that what they are purchasing benefits pollinators and the farmers working to protect them.



At the heart of the Bee Better Certified is a set of standards that establish a high bar for habitat restoration -- farmers are required to dedicate at least 5% of their land to flower-rich habitat and pesticide risk reduction, and ensure that the program meets its goal of helping bees.

This focus on habitat is unique among farm certifications programs, yet compatible with any farming operation: large or small, organic or conventional, and everything in between. Implementing the production standards can enhance any operation, but in particular they will help transition conventional growers towards more sustainable practices.

Bee Better Certified was developed with the guidance of an outstanding advisory board comprised of experts in the fields of agriculture, certification, pesticides risk mitigation, pollinator research, retail and sustainable sourcing. It was launched thanks to startup funding through the Conservation Grant Program run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Services. We are partnering with Oregon Tilth, one of the largest organic certifiers in the U.S., as the first Bee Better Certified accredited certification body."

Bee Better Certified Production Standards

- ◆ Before a farm can be certified, it must meet standards for habitat provision, pesticide reduction, and commercial bumblebee management. The basic requirements are:
- ◆ 5% of the land must be flower-rich habitat
- ◆ Nest sites for native bees must be included in the habitat
- ◆ Habitats must be protected from pesticides
- ◆ Commercially reared bumble bees can be used only in sealed environments
- ◆ Learn more at www.beebettercertified.org
- ◆ And support the Xerces Society by joining for just \$35!!

REMEMBER

- ◆ One in 3 bites of food you eat is a result of insect pollination
- ◆ There are roughly 3,600 species of bees native to North America
- ◆ 28% of North American bumble bees species are in decline

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The Bee Better Certified seal indicates that certified ingredients were grown in ways that support bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. When you buy Bee Better Certified products, you can be confident that your purchasing decisions directly benefit farms that prioritize pollinator conservation.

