

On-Course Apiary Supports Pollinators And Helps Evaluate Management Practices

Kennett Square Golf And Country Club
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Issue

Honey bee populations are in decline throughout the United States and around the world. Many view golf courses, and the products used to maintain them, as significant contributors to the decline of pollinator populations. However, golf courses can provide valuable habitat for supporting beneficial pollinators like bees.

Action

An on-course apiary was established at Kennett Square Golf and Country Club to promote pollinators and ensure that golf course management practices were not harming local bee populations. The apiary site was prepared in an out-of-play area within a riparian buffer near the irrigation pond. The riparian buffer was comprised of native plant material that had been carefully selected to promote pollinators and butterflies. Two nucleus hives – i.e., small, established colonies of about 5,000 bees and one mated queen – were purchased and installed in standard Langstroth hives. The hives were placed on a stable, paver base and a windbreak was constructed to protect the hives from winter winds.

Before establishing the apiary, Kennett Square Golf and Country Club joined the local beekeeper's club. Additionally, Superintendent Paul Stead, CGCS, attended meetings of the beekeeper's club, a seminar for beginning beekeepers and read several books to learn more about beekeeping. An experienced beekeeper also was hired by the golf course to mentor the staff and maintain the hives during their first year.

Results

Since the hives were installed, the bees have become well-established in their new habitat. Golfers have been very supportive of the project and many are curious about how the hives are progressing. There has been no evidence that golf course maintenance practices have had any ill effects on the bee population. Mr. Stead continues to work closely with Dr. Ben McGraw, associate professor of turfgrass at Penn State University, and Dr. Mike Agnew, technical manager at Syngenta Turf and Landscape, to plan insecticide treatments so that they will not harm the bee population. He is especially careful with applications targeting annual bluegrass weevils. Mr. Stead also continues to follow established best management practices to avoid

harming pollinators. He uses carefully calibrated equipment to apply insect-control products, follows pesticide label instructions, immediately waters in grub-control materials and controls food sources for pollinators in areas treated with potentially harmful products.

While the bees at Kennett Square Golf and Country Club are not expected to produce a significant amount of honey this season, honey produced next season will be used in public-relations efforts. The club will also host tours to promote beekeeping and other environmental programs being implemented on the course. In addition to the newly established bee hives, Kennett Square Golf and Country Club has been a certified Audubon Cooperative Wildlife Sanctuary since 2010. Plans are in place to establish additional pollinator-friendly habitats by expanding native plant areas and enhancing pond edges.



The beehives at Kennett Square Golf and Country Club demonstrate that, with proper planning, golf courses can provide valuable habitat for pollinators like honey bees.