

The Farm and Ashland's Pollinator Culture

Contributing to Ashland's Bee City USA designation, The Farm at SOU buzzes with purpose. In 2015, Southern Oregon University collaborated with Bee City USA to develop certification guidelines for Bee Campus status, paving the road for others, such as Purdue University, Cal Poly Pomona, UC San Diego, and Stony Brook University. As the nation's very first Bee Campus USA, Southern Oregon University demonstrates consistent dedication to expanding impact through pollinator habitat preservation and hive stewardship. In 2022, a student-driven apiary project added hives and a Master Beekeeper mentorship program to The Farm with the explicit goal of creating habitat refuges for native pollinators ([read more here](#)).

Since then, The Farm's continued sustainable practices make it one of the safest environments in Ashland for these vulnerable insects. One of the lesser recognized (yet highly effective) pollinators include mason bees. With The Farm's Unlike the honeybee, with European origins, mason bees are native to the Pacific Northwest. Oregon is home to around 20 species. These pollinators might only be active for four to six weeks each spring, but are efficient - with a 95% pollination success rate. In tandem with The Farm's native landscaping, the mason bees have been provided a home that is carefully preserved and protected.

On top of that, mason bees emerge weeks before most other pollinators, making them critical for early-blooming fruit trees. Since they forage approximately 200 to 300 feet around their nest, mason bees at The Farm play a large role in the orchard and food forest. The Farm's use of pollinator friendly pest management prevents nesting material contamination, especially important as mason bees are especially sensitive to chemical pesticides since they use soil and mud to seal their nests. The Farm continues to embody what it means for a university to contribute to the culture of its community at large through prioritizing diverse pollinator populations, contributing to the culture of Ashland.

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