

# Introduction:

## The Pollinator Port Project Toolkit

### *A Citywide Effort to Bring Back Native Bees*

Welcome to the **Pollinator Port Project Toolkit**—a resource designed for educators, gardeners, and community organizers who want to take meaningful action for pollinators in New York City and beyond.

The Pollinator Port Project (PPP) began as a practical experiment in ecological design—one that merges research and educational outreach to support native bees in urban environments. Led by **The Horticultural Society of New York (The Hort)**, in partnership with **Rutgers University** and the **New York City Department of Transportation (DOT)**, and supported by the **Ittleson Foundation** and **The Burpee Foundation**, this project aims to raise awareness about native bees and create more habitat space for these vital pollinators.

Since 2021, The Hort and its partners have transformed public plazas and Open Streets into living laboratories for pollinator conservation. Guided by **Dr. Kimberly Russell**, a leading bee researcher at Rutgers, the team developed two complementary habitat models: the **Bee Hotel**, designed for cavity-nesting bees, and the **Bee Bunker**, for ground-nesting species. Built from simple, replicable materials, we are continuing to refine and improve these models for ensuring bee colonization and sturdiness to withstand NYC's urban environment. Our final versions of the models will be available in 2026.

### *About the Toolkit*

This toolkit was created to help you bring the principles of the Pollinator Port Project into your own space. Inside, you'll find:

- **Pollinator Plant Palette**, curated by The Hort's horticultural experts, highlighting native and beneficial species that support bees from early spring through late fall

### ***About the Toolkit (cont.)***

- **Native Bee ID Bingo sheet** to help you get familiar with our native pollinator friends
- Customizable **lesson plans** for educators
- **Resource Guide** of recommended resources for continued learning from trusted organizations such as the Xerces Society, USDA, and Cornell Botanic Gardens, to help deepen your understanding of pollinator ecology
- **Pollinator Port Pledge** for encouraging stewardship and community engagement

Each element of this toolkit is designed to make pollinator care approachable and adaptable. Whether you're teaching students, tending a community garden, or greening a sidewalk planter, your efforts help build a citywide network of habitats that sustain both biodiversity and community life.

### ***Using the Toolkit Responsibly***

Creating habitat for native bees is an act of stewardship—and with it comes responsibility. As you put these tools into practice, we ask that you:

- **Work with your local ecosystem.** Use plants suited to your region and soil type, and avoid introducing invasive species.
- **Observe before you intervene.** Learn which pollinators are already present and how they use the landscape before adding structures or plants.
- **Avoid pesticides.** Even “bee-safe” products can disrupt pollinator health—opt instead for natural pest management strategies.
- **Share what you learn.** Engage your students, neighbors, and community members in observation, data collection, and conversation. The more people who understand pollinators, the stronger our collective impact will be.

By using this toolkit thoughtfully, you become part of a larger movement—one that values both ecological health and community connection.

### ***Looking Ahead***

As the Pollinator Port Project expands across all five boroughs, The Hort and its partners continue to study, refine, and maintain pollinator habitats—while empowering others to do the same. Together, we can reimagine our city as a place where native bees thrive alongside people, one Bee Hotel, one Bee Bunker, one bloom at a time.

***<https://www.thehort.org/the-pollinator-port-project/>***