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Phipps All Abuzz About Saving the Bees

New educational exhibit gets kids up close and personal with bees

Pittsburgh, Pa. — [Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens](#), with the help of apoidea apiary, has installed an observational beehive in its [SEED Classroom](#) that allows kids to safely get nose to antenna with the bees. Phipps staff hopes to use the observational beehive to teach guests about the importance of pollinators and the plight that they face as their numbers continue to decline dramatically.

Each season, between 30 – 40 percent of all bee colonies die, leaving their populations, as well as humans, plants and animals, in a dire situation. Bees pollinate 70 to 90 percent of the crops that supply 90 percent of the world’s food. Without bees, the nation’s food supply would be dramatically affected. Even meat and milk products are threatened by the loss of bees because cows eat alfalfa, which is pollinated by these insects. Various studies, including a [2016 study by the EPA](#), have shown that a major cause of this decline in bees is the use of a chemical called neonicotinoids that is used in pesticides by agribusinesses, landscapers and gardeners.

The new observational bee hive comes after a summer of [PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center’s](#) effort to educate tens of thousands of people in the region about the problem and what they can do. In the SEED Classroom, Phipps hopes to complement Penn Environment’s programs by educating guests about these important pollinators. Adult education classes, events and youth programs will be offered on- and off-site. Kids in kindergarten – grade 8 can learn about their fascinating lives in a new field trip program called “Bees and Pollination,” for example, and Bee Family Festival on August 26, will invite guests of all ages to participate in hands-on science, games and physical activities while enjoying interactive entertainment.

Christina Neumann, principal beekeeper at [apoidea apiary](#), finds educating the public to be just as important as raising the bees. She played an important role in the installation of this beehive and will continue to be instrumental to its well-being and uses. Neumann is a trained architect from Carnegie Mellon University with a focus in sustainable design. Her experiences in green architectural design inspired her to forge an ever deepening relationship with bee species. She also is a part-time horticulture staff member at Phipps.

An equally important role of this beehive will be to collect data for research. As the bees buzz to and from the hive, Phipps staff will record observations, such as what plants are currently blooming in the [Center for Sustainable Landscapes Environs](#) and Rooftop Edible Garden, how much time bees spend on each plant, what times of day they are most active and what types of pollen they are collecting. Over an extended period of time, Phipps staff and Neumann will be able to use this information to see trends in climate, learn where the best spots are to place particular plants, and even contribute to research that other scientists are doing nationwide.

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About Phipps: Founded in 1893, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Pittsburgh, Pa. is a green leader

among public gardens with a mission to inspire and educate all with the beauty and importance of plants; to advance sustainability and promote human and environmental well-being through action and research; and to celebrate its historic glasshouse. Learn more: phipps.conservatory.org.

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center is a statewide non-profit dedicated to educating and protecting our air, water and open spaces with more than 20,000 supporters in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

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