

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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## Repurposed feed and seed bags have become support for pollinator project

Creativity and passion for the environment have spurred on a group of volunteers who are using polypropylene feed and seed bags to help the Elkhart Pollinator Habitat. [University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalists](#) serving Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties, and Logan, Menard, and Sangamon counties have been busy this winter repurposing what was destined for the landfill into useful reusable totes that they are using to raise funds to support the habitat project.

"I was gifted a repurposed plastic birdseed bag and thought I can do that," shared Master Naturalist Mona Maas. She learned that these bags are difficult to recycle and most of them end up in landfills or oceans. "At the same time, I had been looking for a way to fund the hiring of an assistant for my Master Naturalist project, the Elkhart Pollinator Habitat. I hoped perhaps this could be it!"

"My Master Naturalist training gave me the confidence to develop the Elkhart Pollinator Habitat in 2020. The habitat is well established and a joy to maintain, but I want to see it thrive for a long time. I made a presentation to our [Village Board](#), who supported the concept of my fundraiser with a promise of a \$500 matching gift! I presented the Repurpose PP project to my community using Facebook and our community newsletter. I connected with [Illinois Audubon Springfield Chapter](#) and the [Illinois Native Plant Society Central Chapter](#) to share about the project and get help collecting bags. I asked friends who have chickens, and the bags started coming in, ultimately totaling more than 300," shared Maas.

Maas coordinated a group of 10 Master Naturalists from the two Extension units for six full days of cleaning, cutting, folding, and sewing. Even after the project workdays, local MN Cindy Intravartolo and sister Diane continued the PP bags process at home in Fulton County. Intravartolo has been collecting feed bags from [Wildlife Prairie Park](#) where she volunteers and does the whole bag-making process herself.

As the season changes and Maas and her Master Naturalist friends return to their outdoor projects, they are hoping to find others who can continue the bag repurposing project.

"It didn't take us long to learn how to quickly churn out the bags," Maas explained. "So far we have completed more than 225. Now we are working to get the word out and involve the community! These bags will be available during the Elkhart Wildflower Walks in April."

For more information about repurposing feed and seed bags, contact ag and natural resources Extension program coordinator Christine Belless.



Photo by Mona Maas, Master Naturalist

*Extension Master Naturalist Cindy Intravartolo from Fulton County, joined a group of EMNs who have collected and repurposed feed and seed bags into reusable totes. The group is using the repurposed totes to raise funds to support the Elkhart Pollinator Habitat.*

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