

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell

I ILLINOIS Extension

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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Thanks to our partnership with Mason State Tree Nursery, Extension staff, Master Gardeners, and Master Naturalists took part in Project Wingspan training that will help increase butterfly and bee habitat in eight states. Our volunteers will also assist the local Nursery staff with additional responsibilities.

Master Volunteers' Involvement at Mason Tree Nursery Expands to Help 8-State Project Wingspan

University of Illinois Extension, Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit, Master Naturalists and Masters Gardeners have become involved in a partnership among the Illinois Department Natural Resources (IDNR), Mason State Tree Nursery, and Pollinator Partnership in an effort to enhance land across the Midwest to support our imperiled pollinators. The goal of Project Wingspan is to increase monarch and Rusty Patched Bumble Bee habitat in hopes of seeing an increase in their quickly declining populations.

Dave Horvath, Manager, IDNR, Mason State Nursery, reached out to local Extension staff for support from Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners, in promoting Pollinator Partnership's, Project Wingspan. Horvath stated, "Teaming up with the University of Illinois Extension - Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners will provide the project with individuals that have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to help accomplish the task of improving habitat for the Monarch Butterfly as well as all pollinators.

Project Wingspan is a two-year project by the Pollinator Partnership, who is leading a coalition of partners, public land managers, and private landowners. The project volunteers will be collecting seed throughout the states of Arkansas, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Michigan. The Mason State Tree Nursery is a core partner and the seed collection center for the whole 8-state Project Wingspan program. Trained volunteers throughout the Midwest hand collect seed and ship them to the nursery to be cleaned, planted, and redistributed back to collected areas. Local Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists who regularly volunteer at Mason State Tree Nursery will be able to assist with the cleaning and planting tasks.

In June, the Mason State Tree Nursery hosted a seed collection workshop to train local volunteers, public land managers, and private landowners. The workshop aimed to train participants in seed collection methods and plant identification. Over 40 people were in attendance including IDNR staff, Illinois Central College students and instructor, U of I Extension staff and Extension Master Volunteers, as well as private landowners. Horvath said, "It is great to see such a good response to the seed collection workshop. I am looking forward to working with the Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners on Project Wingspan.

Newly appointed IDNR Director Colleen Callahan participated in a portion of the

training at Mason State Tree Nursery. She was impressed by the turnout and stressed that partnerships like this are important in accomplishing IDNR conservation goals.

To learn more about how you can get involved in Project Wingspan visit <https://www.pollinator.org/wingspan>



Photo by Anita Wilkinson | Illinois Extension