

The Buzz About Kentucky's Pollinator Plots

A pollinator plot is a designated area where wildflowers and grasses are grown to support pollinators and other wildlife. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet manages 105 pollinator plots covering more than 275 acres on state-maintained roadsides and properties, like rest areas and welcome centers.

Purpose of Pollinators

Pollinators move pollen from one flower to another, helping plants produce seeds, fruits, and vegetables. They are essential to many of the foods we eat. It's often said that one out of every three bites of food depends on pollinators. As an agriculture-focused state, bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, flies, birds, and bats all play a role in keeping Kentucky's ecosystems healthy to support crop production on local farms. Pollinator plots also help conserve vulnerable insect species.



Kentucky Roadsides Promote Pollinators

Drivers may notice taller vegetation along rural interstates, parkways, and some other state highways. KYTC will continue mowing next to the shoulder for safety and will mow other areas less often. This helps native plants and wildflowers grow, creating better habitat for pollinators. Pollinator plots are placed with safety in mind, including outside the 30-foot recovery zone and in areas that maintain clear visibility for drivers.



Expanding Pollinator Habitats

KYTC is creating and maintaining pollinator plots across the state. These areas are planted with native wildflowers and grasses that provide food and shelter for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. As more plots are added, they will connect habitats, support biodiversity, and help create healthier roadsides throughout Kentucky. KYTC has plans to add more plots as funding allows.

Results Take Time

Restoring native wildflowers and vegetation is a gradual process. Based on the experience of other state transportation agencies, noticeable changes take time. It can take several years to fully develop plots as crews work to remove competing vegetation and reseed selected areas with a wildflower pollinator mix. Non-native annuals are sometimes used temporarily to establish plots. KYTC will continue managing these areas by encouraging native plants and controlling invasive species. With each growing season, Kentucky's roadsides will become healthier habitats for pollinators.



Benefits of Pollinator Plots

Creating more diverse roadside landscapes does more than support pollinators. Research suggests that colorful wildflowers and a mix of native vegetation can help keep drivers more alert. Mowing less often may also reduce deer-vehicle collisions by making roadsides less attractive to deer, which are drawn to freshly cut grass.

