

Stuart Recreation Area Native Plant Garden

2011 Accomplishments

The Monongahela National Forest worked on many fronts to improve the 5,500 square foot pollinator garden it established last year at one of the forest's most visited locations, Stuart Recreation Area. This recreation area receives over 20,000 visitors each year making this an ideal location for public outreach and interpretation regarding the importance of pollinators and their ecological needs.

This year, the garden needed many things to increase its value to pollinators. First, several new species of plants were purchased and planted in the garden by AmeriCorps volunteers. Species purchased included *Gentiana andrewsii* (bottle gentian), *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed), *Asclepias quadrifolia* (Four leafed milkweed), *Lilium superbum* (Turk's cap lily), *Chelone glabra* (white turtlehead), and *Symphytotrichum novae-angliae* (New England aster). In addition to planting new species, volunteers also assisted in weeding and mulching the garden resulting in 98 volunteer hours and \$2,043 of in-kind services.



Pollinators Abound at Stuart Recreation Area

Another key aspect to improving the native plant garden in 2011 was providing cover and places for bees to raise young. Most native bees are solitary nest makers and build their nests in the ground or in pre-existing cavities. In the past, we had been suppressing weeds and conserving water through the use of wood mulch.



AmeriCorps Help At the Garden

Unfortunately, many ground-nesting bees look for garden sites where they can dig small tunnels to lay eggs in individually-made brood cells that are provisioned with pollen and some nectar. Since between 60-70% of the native West Virginia bee species need bare dirt to excavate tunnels for their nest cells, we wanted to find a replacement for wood mulch. Our largest purchase for the Stuart Pollinator Garden was an electric leaf shredder. Volunteers will soon convert the leaves shed by our trees in the fall into a more bee-friendly mulch leaving patches of bare dirt. These bee-

friendly practices should encourage use of the garden by native bees.

The final task for the native plant garden in 2011 was protecting it from deer. Although the garden is surrounded by lush forest vegetation, it quickly became obvious that deer favored the plants inside the native plant garden. To protect our investment, the Liquid Fence® Deer & Rabbit Repellent was purchased and applied to each plant in the garden. This eco-friendly repellent stops deer and rabbits from eating flowers, shrubs, trees, and vines. The product is environmentally safe and biodegradable and is even safe to use on edible crops. Considering that just one deer can get up to ten pounds of food a day, this will be a long-term problem.



Viceroy Caterpillar in Garden

Garden: Stuart Pollinator Garden

Year Awarded: 2011

Expenditures: \$1,000

In-Kind Services: \$2,043

Partners: AmeriCorps, Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, Enchanters Garden, and NRCS Alderson Plant Materials