



**To: Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors**

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## **DDA celebrates *Open Garden Day***

Today, the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) celebrated National Pollinator Week with an activity filled Open Garden Day featuring a ribbon cutting for DDA's pollinators' garden, a monarch butterfly release, educational presentations about pollinators and laboratory tours. In his opening remarks, Michael Scuse, DDA Secretary said, "As a farmer and an avid outdoorsman, I fully understand the importance of pollinators. Seventy-five percent of the world's flowering plant species rely on pollinators to transfer pollen grains from flower to flower of the same species so the plants can set seeds and fruits. One hundred and thirty of the crop plants grown in the United States are pollinated by bees. The rich biodiversity in our forests and other natural areas is dependent both directly and indirectly upon our native pollinators. Our food supply and our quality of life would be seriously impacted if we lost our pollinators."



*Secretary Michael Scuse cutting the ribbon on the DDA Pollinator Garden.*

Scuse continued, "The Pollinator Garden is the first step in a Livable Landscape Design Project that will enable DDA to set an example for sustainable, *Livable Delaware* landscaping. Dr. Faith Kuehn, DDA Plant Industries Administrator,

approached University of Delaware Professor Chad Nelson, and asked if a landscape design class could help with a concept drawing. Professor Nelson gave the challenge to an Advanced Landscaping Class. Their design is on display in the conference center. I am very pleased with the design that includes, among other things, a wildflower border along Rt. 13, a rain garden, and a "green roof" comprised of native plants which will also help with energy savings in our building."

Faith Kuehn discussed the importance of pollinators, especially, bees and her sections duties to protect them. Kuehn said, "You have probably heard the news stories about disappearing honey bee populations, attributed to a phenomenon called 'Colony Collapse Disorder'. But it's not just honey bees that are suffering from population declines. Populations of native bees are also disappearing. The vast stretches of farmland, meadows and forests that once provided the food and nesting resources for bees are being replaced by cities, roads and suburban areas that are not as well suited to bees' survival. Diseases and bee pests have been accidentally introduced, and also reduced population levels.

To describe how important bees have been, and will continue to be, to Delaware's agricultural and horticultural industries, we'll start with our state flower – the peach blossom. In 1890, there were 4 million peach trees in Delaware. Peaches were king. In 1899, Sussex County was the largest strawberry-producing county in the United States. By the 1930's, Kent County had more apple trees per square mile than any other county in the United States. Production of peaches, strawberries and apples either requires bees, or is greatly enhanced by their activity. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the canning industry was a thriving business in Kent and Sussex

counties. Again, the work of bees was necessary to produce many of the fruits and vegetables packed by the H. P. Cannon, J. G. Townsend and the many other canning businesses.”

Today, Kuehn continued, whether you consider the more than \$15 million dollars worth of vine crops produced each year, or the wide variety of Delaware-grown berries, apples, squash and vegetables sold in the 10 Farmer’s Markets throughout the state, you understand why the health and conservation of bees is important to our agriculture.”

DDA’s pollinator garden, begun in 2007, and dedicated today, has nectar and pollen rich native plants to attract, bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. Native plants tend to be low maintenance and hardy, because they are adapted to our region.



### **Monarch Butterfly Release**

**Left to right:** *Steve Castorani, co-founder of North Creek Nurseries, Dr. Jan Seitz, Associate Dean and Director of Cooperative Extension and Outreach, University of Delaware, Michael Scuse, Secretary of Agriculture, Les Stillson, State Operations Manager, Delaware State Office, NRCS.*

The *Pollinator Garden* has also been designated as an Official Monarch Waystation (#1172, [www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org)). Monarch waystations are a nationwide system that provides habitat for monarch butterflies to stop along their migratory route to Mexico ([www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org)). These habitats provide nectar sources and the required host plant of milkweed, so butterflies can lay their eggs.

Donations to the Pollinator Garden were made as follows:

- North Creek Nursery – Plants
- University of Delaware Botanic Garden – Magnolia
- Dr. Dewey Caron (formally, U. D. Cooperative Extension) – Technical guidance to State Apiarist and the Farming for Native Bees Project

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