UC Davis Bee Haven
2024 Final Report

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Greetings from the UC Davis Bee Haven. This will be the Haven’s final annual report; it’s earlier than usual because my position as Haven manager comes to an end this month. Unlike other campus museums, the Haven has never had a dedicated source of support: when grant funds run out, so do I. Regrettably, the last two proposals I’ve submitted were not selected for funding.

I’d like to thank our many supporters and visitors who have made the Haven a unique place for information and inspiration about bees and the plants that support them.

The garden began with an idea forged by Häagen-Dazs and UC Davis. Recognizing a need for the public to better understand the link between bees and our food supply, the garden was created in Spring 2009 with a donation from Häagen-Dazs. Working in partnership, a team led by Missy (Borel) Gable of the California Center for Urban Horticulture, the UC Davis Department of Entomology, and Häagen-Dazs developed and judged a design competition and made the garden happen.

I came on board as a full-time manager in 2013 and added outreach programs; that year the Sacramento Bee named the Haven one of the region’s top ten public gardens. Financial support from Häagen-Dazs and UC Davis continued until 2015, at which time the garden was forced to become self-supporting. A name change to the UC Davis Bee Haven reflected this and the garden’s diversity beyond honey bees.

Major grant funding and donations during this time came from the US Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Cygnet Foundation, Daughters of the American Revolution, the Woodland Sunrise Rotary, and the Sacramento Area Beekeepers Association. This support, and the time and funds from all donors and volunteers, is greatly appreciated.

I’ve enjoyed meeting so many of you through teaching about bees and helping you with your bee gardens. Here are a few highlights from the Haven’s history from 2014 through June 2024.

Total volunteer hours: 2708. This has a value of $90,691 according to Independent Sector’s Value of Volunteer Time report.

Total visitors to organized programs: 21,448.

The Bee Gardener blog: One hundred posts with an average of 450 views per post. Popular topics included low-water bee gardening and building and using bee houses.

YouTube/UCDavisBeeHaven (2021 to present): Twenty-six videos with an average of 426 views per video.
I expanded on the initial garden design by adding more plant species to ensure year-round bloom and to introduce visitors to lesser-known bee plants (left). Expansion included ideas about ways to provide for bees in small gardens, such as the use of a straw wattle coil to create a raised bed for vegetables (right).

Additions to the Haven included a children’s learning area (left) and a bee hive (right). The children’s area was removed during our first funding cut in 2019, as we no longer had the staff to maintain it. The hive remains thanks to staff at the Laidlaw Honey Bee Research Facility.
We also needed to develop ways to manage the large amounts of green waste generated by our frequent pruning and deadheading, which is needed to keep our plants producing flowers for the bees. Excess branches were bundled into path borders, which also provide beneficial insect habitat (left). Compost bins were built to turn our waste into garden mulch (right).

We took on bee-plant research projects to obtain grant funding to support the garden. I enjoyed returning to my scientific roots and was proud to have the Haven run by bee scientists for bees. One of our research plots is shown on the left. Research results informed our education programs, which included garden tours and classes. On the right is my last-ever tour group, the Santa Clara County Master Gardeners.
There were always challenges! Our top two were squirrels, which damage plant roots and garden irrigation (left), and theft, including shed break-ins and tool destruction (right; who steals the wheels off a hose reel?!?)

Volunteers have been the life of the Haven. In addition to their hard work, they have been important donors. Betty Warne provided funding for interpretive signs (left), and Rick Williams designed and built our sundial (right). The dial is now in storage and will be re-installed in a new location.

Thanks to all our supporters for a great 15 years. Happy Bee Gardening!