

RED RIVER COLLEGE BEE PROJECT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

WHERE ARE THE HIVES LOCATED?

Three hives were installed on the 4th floor patio in the Paterson GlobalFoods Institute (PGI). This was determined to be an ideal location as the patio is currently not in use and it is well protected from the elements.

HOW MUCH HONEY DOES EACH HIVE PRODUCE?

Each hive is expected to produce about 25kg of honey per season (Spring to Fall), so there will be approximately 75 kg produced every year from the PGI hives. The harvest will be shared between the School of Hospitality and Culinary Arts, Food Services, and the Sustainability Office.

CAN I HAVE SOME OF THE HONEY?

Food Services and the School of Hospitality and Culinary Arts will be featuring our ultra-local honey at food service locations, including Jane's. Honey will also be available for purchase at a farmers' market being planned for the fall at Notre Dame Campus. Stay tuned for more information!

WILL THE HIVES BE THERE YEAR-ROUND?

The bees will be removed to a safe location during the winter months and will be reinstalled in the spring.

CAN I GO SEE THE HIVES?

Access to the 4th floor patio (and therefore the beehives) is restricted. However, there will be opportunities for students and staff to visit and learn about the hives. Beeproject Apiaries has agreed to have small groups of interested students and staff accompany them when they tend to the hives (every 7 – 14 days). Information on hive visits will be made available through All Staff News and www.rrc.ca/sustainability.

IS IT SAFE?

Honeybees die when they sting (not all bees do) so they are considered docile and only sting in self-defense or to protect the hive. Typically, people are only stung by honeybees when entering a hive or if they are blocking the entrances. Unlike wasps, bees are only interested in pollen, so they won't be trying to get at your lunch. A very small proportion of the adult population (3%) and children (0.5%) have serious allergies to bees and should take the same precautions they would normally take when outdoors.

WHAT TYPE OF BEES ARE THERE?

The bees on the PGI roof are European Honeybees. Honeybees are not native to North America and were brought over by European settlers. Because of this, most honeybees in North America are domesticated, there are very few found in the wild.

Honeybees have hairy bodies and vary in colour from yellow-brown to dark brown. They feed on flower nectar and collect pollen to feed their larvae. Honeybees are social insects that live in colonies. Each colony has one queen and several hundred male drones, but the majority of is made up of female worker bees that forage for nectar and pollen.

At its peak mid-season, each hive contains approximately 40-50,000 bees, meaning there could be as many as 150,000 bees living on the roof. This seems like a lot, however bees dissipate quickly into the environment, each traveling up to 5 km to forage. In fact, the City of Winnipeg has stated that a significant increase in downtown beekeeping would not result in a noticeable increase in the number of bees seen around the area.

DO ALL BEES MAKE HONEY?

There are over 800 species of bees in Canada and none of the native species produce honey. Common native bee species found locally include the bumblebee, the mason bee and the leafcutter bee.

Unlike honeybees, most native bee species are solitary, meaning they don't live in hives but build independent nests. This also means that they tend to be less aggressive than social bees because they don't have a hive to defend.

While all bees are pollinators, not all pollinators are bees. There are over 1,000 species of pollinators in Canada which include some wasps, flies, beetles, butterflies, moths, bats, and birds.

WHAT IS POLLINATION?

Pollination is the process of transferring pollen from one flower to another. This pollen comes from the stamens (the male reproductive organ of the flower) and contains the necessary DNA to fertilize an egg in the pistil (the female reproductive organ of the flower). When a pollinator visits a flower (to eat its nectar, for example) pollen from the stamens sticks to it. When the pollinator visits another flower, the pollen is rubbed off onto the pistil and a fertilized egg can develop into a fruit, which carries seeds to grow a new plant.

Some plants, like willows, are wind-pollinated meaning that the wind blows the pollen from flower to flower. However, the majority of plants that require pollination rely on animals to transfer the pollen.

Unlike other pollinators, honeybees create a product as a result of their roles as pollinators: honey! Honey is not only delicious but is another food item we can produce locally, boosting our local economy and saving greenhouse gas emissions from transportation.

WHY DO POLLINATORS NEED OUR HELP?

There has been a lot of information in the media lately about the plight of bees. Pollinators, like bees, are essential to our ecosystem and to our food system. Nearly 90% of all plants and as much as two thirds of food crops worldwide require pollination for fertilization. Without pollinators, our diets would be very different and would lack many important nutrients. Additionally, other animals would become threatened from loss of habitat and food sources.

Unfortunately, the populations of many pollinators, including bees, have been declining in recent years due to pesticide use, disease, and loss of habitat. Fortunately, many people are taking action to support pollinators, including the recent change to City of Winnipeg By-Laws allowing beekeeping in the downtown. Red River College is excited to support the regeneration of the honeybee population and help increase awareness about the vital role they play in our ecosystem.

You can support pollinators in your own yard by creating a pollinator-friendly garden including a wide variety of native flowering plants and habitat (such as bee houses). Eliminating pesticide use is also a great way to support pollinators.

Some places to find more information on how you can help pollinators include the [Manitoba Museum's "Prairie Pollination" virtual exhibit](#), [Urban Bee Network](#), [Nature Conservancy of Canada](#), and the [David Suzuki Foundation](#).

WHY DOWNTOWN?

There are many reasons to have bees in downtown Winnipeg! An urban setting is ideal for bees because it offers better protection from wind and predators, while also exposing them to fewer pesticides than in a rural setting. Additionally, urban areas tend to offer a wider variety of plants and flowers with staggered pollination periods, leading to healthier and more resilient colonies.

Plus, it's great for us! [Beeproject's Urban Pollination Project](#) is an opportunity to bring the bees, and the learning, to our own backyards. Urban beekeeping encourages people to learn more about our food and ecosystems. And, of course, the bees help our trees, flowers, and gardens grow and thrive.

MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT PARTNERS.

Red River College is committed to sustainability. Getting involved in the Bee Project is one way the College can extend our commitment to sustainability beyond the walls of our campus. Learn more about sustainability at Red River College at [Red Goes Green](#).

[Beeproject Apiaries](#) is run by Chris Kirouac and Lindsay Nikkel, two certified beekeepers with a passion for bees. With 60 hives at their farm near Gimli, and an additional 29 hives in the City of Winnipeg, Beeproject is dedicated to supporting the declining honeybee population by using sustainable beekeeping and sharing their knowledge and expertise with the community.