

Our mission is to increase awareness and understanding of agriculture among New Jersey educators and students. You can learn more on our website

newjersey.agclassroom.org

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It's a Good Time to Talk About Bees

February brings Valentine's Day, so we thought this would be a great time to focus on a different kind of honey - the kind made by bees!

Bees are vital for producing about \$200 million of fruits and vegetables annually in New Jersey, including two of the state's biggest crops, blueberries and cranberries.

NJAITC has a host of lessons on bees for all grades on our new [Animal Agriculture](#) webpage. The page also includes a video tour of the beehives at FulfillNJ, the food bank of Ocean and Monmouth counties.

February tends to be a dreary month. Our bee lessons will get your students moving around, acting like pollinators, or working together to build hotels for native bees. Check out our lessons below.

It's Not Too Late to Apply to Be Our 2026 Teacher of the Year



There are only two weeks left to apply to be our 2026 Teacher of the Year, who will win an all-expenses-paid trip to the National Agriculture in the Classroom annual conference. The deadline to apply is February 16.

Our Teacher of the Year is a PreK-8 teacher who teaches about agriculture as part of their core curriculum and is passionate about teaching students where their food comes from and how it is grown.

To be our Teacher of the Year, you must be a New Jersey-certified teacher of grades PreK-8 in a public or private school.

The Teacher of the Year will be awarded an all-expenses-paid trip to the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization's annual conference, the premier forum to learn about teaching agricultural concepts as part of the core curriculum. This year the conference will be held in Providence, RI June 22-25.

You can't win if you don't apply!
Click [here](#) for more information and for the application.

Free Cabbage Plants for Third Graders

Third grade teachers - take note! You can sign up now to receive a free cabbage plant from Bonnie Plants for every child in your class.

For the past 30 years, Bonnie Plants has been running its 3rd Grade Cabbage Program. When you sign up, Bonnie Plants will deliver cabbage plants to your school in March, the start of the growing season for cool-season vegetables. The company does run a cabbage-growing contest for students, but you do not have to participate in the contest to receive the plants.



Once the plants arrive, you can do whatever you wish with them. You can plant them in a school garden or in containers, or you can send one home with each student.

This is a great way to introduce children to growing veggies, and the best part is -- it's free! Click [here](#) to learn more about the program and to sign up for cabbage plants.



Free Blueberry Resources Apply Now!

The American Farm Bureau Foundation has announced its 2026 Educator Resource Grants, and the subject is blueberries.

The foundation will give 430 teachers a packet that includes: one copy of its Book of the Year, *I Love Blueberries* by Shannon Anderson, one copy of the accompanying educator's guide, and one set of 30 mini Ag Mags on blueberries. The book is suitable for students in grades K-3.

If more than 430 educators apply, winners will be chosen randomly.

The simple application takes a minute to fill out, so take advantage of some free materials and teach your students about blueberries! Click [here](#) for the application.

Lessons of the Month: All About Bees

New Jersey is home to about 3,500 beekeepers, but only 5% of those are commercial beekeepers with at least 20 managed hives. One hive can house between 30,000 and 60,000 honey bees.

The European honey bee, the most well-known bee, is the bee farmed by beekeepers. It is the official state insect of New Jersey, but this bee is not native to the state or to North America. Settlers from Europe brought honey bees with them about 400 years ago.



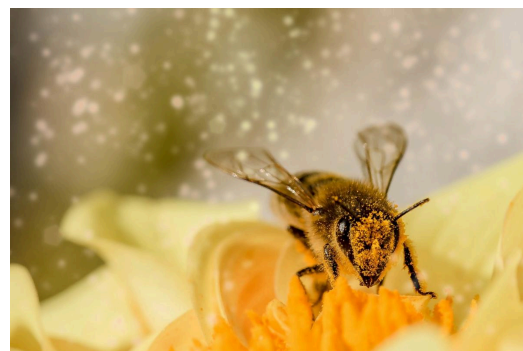
There are, however, at least 350 species of bees that are native to New Jersey. Most are solitary bees, like the mason, leafcutter, and squash bee. The bumble bee, which is the most well-known native bee, lives in social colonies similar to the honey bee.

The beekeeper at FulfillNJ, the food bank of Monmouth and Ocean counties, recently took NJAITC on a tour of its beehives in Neptune. We created a video from this tour that shows students how bees are farmed for honey.

This video, and the accompanying lessons on bees, are part of NJAITC's new *Animal Agriculture* webpage, which you can see if you click [here](#).



**The Big Mac and
The Bee**
Grades 3-5
*can be modified for older
students*



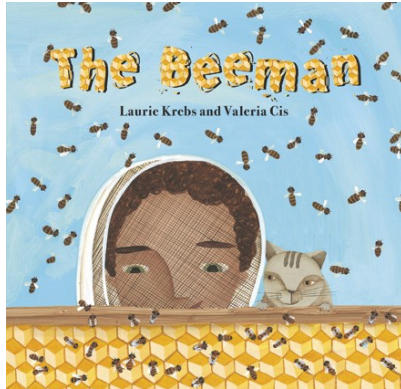
Pollination - A Sticky Situation
Grades PreK-3

Chalk & cotton balls version

An activity using cotton balls and flowers drawn with chalk shows students how pollination works.

If there were no bees, could you still eat a Big Mac? In this lesson, students break down a Big Mac into its parts and learn which ingredients are dependent upon pollination by bees.

Click [here](#) for the lesson.



The Beeman *Grades 3-5*

Students will learn the importance of bees and the roles of various types of bees in a hive. Students will also create unique poems to demonstrate that understanding.

Click [here](#) for the lesson.



Bees - The Great Pollinators *Grades 3-5*

can be modified for older grades

Students play a game to learn the important role bees play in pollination and strategize what would happen to pollination in different weather scenarios. Click [here](#) for the lesson.

Click [here](#) for the lesson.

Bee puppet and cheetos version

An activity using Cheetos and finger puppets shows students how pollination works.

Click [here](#) for the lesson.



Bee Hotel *Grades 3-5*

can be modified for older students

In this STEM lesson, students learn what solitary bees are, why they are important for pollination, and how to make an effective bee hotel for them.

Click [here](#) for the lesson.



Mind Your Own Beeswax *Grades 6-8*

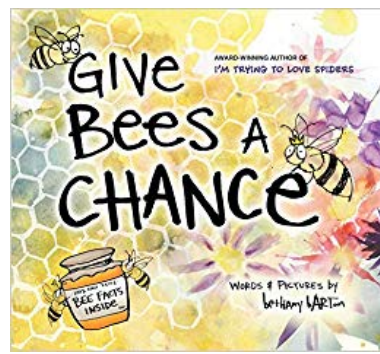
Students solve the problem of excess beeswax, a byproduct of honey bees, by working together to develop a useful beeswax product and market their product to be sold at a local boutique or farmers market.

Click [here](#) for the lesson.

Give Bees A Chance

By Bethany Barton
Grades PreK-3

Not sure whether to high-five bees or run away from them? In this humorous book, the narrator teaches his reluctant buddy Edgar why bees are so important to people and the world.



Flower Talk: How Plants Use Color to Communicate

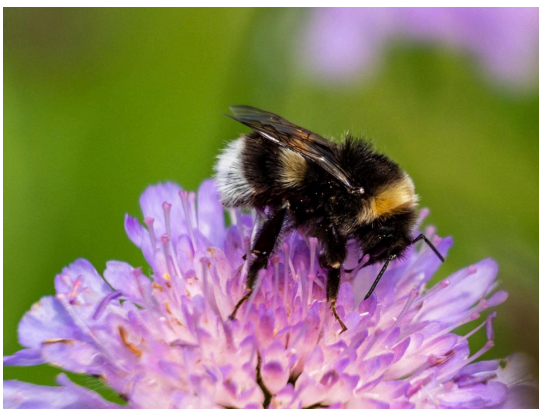
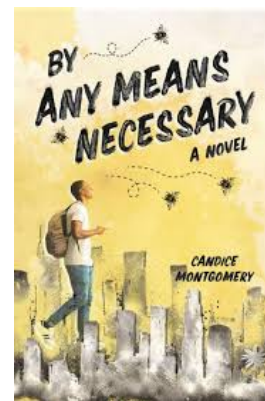
By Sara Levine
Grades 3-6

Plants use the colors of their flowers to communicate with animals and insects. They need to attract animals and insects to move pollen from one flower to another before they can make seeds. A cantankerous cactus reveals the secrets of flower talk.

By Any Means Necessary

By Cam Montgomery
Grades 9-12

On the day Torrey officially becomes a college freshman, he gets a call that might force him to drop out: the bank is foreclosing on the bee farm his Uncle Miles left him. For years, it was just the two of them tending the farm, so Torrey can't let someone erase his uncle's legacy without a fight.



February Ag Gag

When do bees get married?

When they find their honey!

**Happy Valentine's
Day!**



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