Save the Bees with Seed Bombs

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Margaret Badore

Seed bombs began as a fun and friendly tactic for greening abandoned lots in urban spaces. "Guerrilla gardeners" throw balls of seeds and fertilizer into fenced-off spaces that are otherwise neglected, such as brownfields or land in zoning limbo.

Now, a California company is using seed bombs as a strategy to fight the disappearance of bees. Ei Ei Khin and Chris Burley started Seedles with the aim of spreading bee-friendly wildflowers in neighborhoods around the country. Their goal is to grow 1 billion wildflowers with the help of colorful seed balls, a project they call "Grow the Rainbow."

Bee populations have been dropping for about a decade. Scientists think there are a number of contributing factors to colony collapse, including the proliferation of certain pesticides, parasites, and even stress. But a decline in natural habitat—along with the loss of bees' preferred wildflowers—is also a big factor. That's how Seedles hopes to help, by encouraging people to plant more flowers.

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Seedles creates seed balls with wildflowers native to six different regions of the United States. For example, the Midwest mix may include wild perennial lupine, lemon mint and butterfly weed. The seeds are rolled up with organic compost to fertilize the seeds, and non-toxic color powders to add a bit of fun. The balls can be tossed anywhere you want flowers to grow, and with the help of some rain and sun will start to sprout.

For Khin and Burley, helping the bees is part of building a more sustainable food system, which is dependent on pollinators for many foods. Burley told Bay Area Bites that the company is partnering with like-minded local food companies, to give away seed balls and raise awareness about the connection between bees and food.

A pack of 20 seedballs sells for $13.00 on the Seedles website. Or if you're feeling crafty, check out this DIY tutorial on Gardenista.