

# DAY 12-BIODIVERSITY GREENEST



INVESTIGATING THE IMPROVEMENT OF MONARCH BUTTERFLY  
HABITATS ON THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO CAMPUS



PGC GROUP 3-VICTORIA NATION



# Della Reyes

Quality Assurance Manager  
Office of Facilities  
University of Texas at San Antonio  
(Facilities & Grounds Crew. Pictured at front, in red.)

*What pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides are currently used on the UTSA campus?*

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- Pesticides: Talstar PRO, Suspend SC Insecticide, TEMPO, Bifenthrin
- Insecticides: Pyrethrins, Insecticidal Soap
- Herbicides: Roundup (liquid), Surflan, Snapshot (granular) Compost, Celsius WG, Sledgehammer, Lesco Prosecutor, Pendulum

*Are there any native, pollinator-friendly plants currently grown on campus?*

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- Yes, they are located around the football fields (EERF).

*Where are the plants used on campus purchased?*

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- Mortellaro's
- John Deere Landscape
- Casa Verde

*Where on campus, could you grow more native, pollinator-friendly plants free of neonics?*

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- We currently are choosing to plant some pollinator friendly plants on campus, like Black-eyed Susan and Rosemary, around the newly developing areas. This includes around the Student Center and the Engineering & Technologies Building.

*What on campus methods could be used instead of pesticides to ensure health of people, plants and species?*

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- Green products
- Pest resistant plants
- Hand pulling weeds

*What did you learn?*

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Due to the planting of non-native plants on campus, extensive maintenance is required. As a result, the grounds workers are forced to utilize harmful herbicides, insecticides, and pesticides. Upon learning this information, it was very clear as to why very few pollinators are seen around campus. First of all, the only pollinator plants present on campus are located in a remote location, around the football fields. In fact, in all honesty, I have never even been to the football fields on campus, and I would not deny that I am the only one. Secondly, such harsh chemicals

are used in the heavily populated areas of campus, that pollinators would not be able to survive. Actually, even though many planter boxes and grassy areas are around these heavily populated areas, most do not contain any plants. By assumption, I believe that these are easier to maintain by keeping them empty.

### *Were you surprised by your findings?*

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It was not overly surprising to find out all of the pesticides used on campus. Being a native Texan, it required a lot of effort to grow plants when compared with other locations across the country. In San Antonio, the arid climate matched with the sudden changes in weather patterns, make it especially tough for plants to remain healthy without help. I think it is remarkable to know that the University permits the use of so many chemically toxic compounds to be administered all over campus, even though much greener options are available. I was shocked to find out that the campus uses a chemically generated form of compost to bring nutrients to the flowerbeds.

### *Do you have any next steps in mind? If so what would they be?*

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To begin, we were not permitted to access any information beyond the pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides used on campus, which was equally shocking. In our case, it felt as though the officials from the university attempt to contain this information so as to prevent student outrage. However, it is our right as members of this community to be informed and to fight for change when it is needed. It is with this information that we will choose to make efforts to make changes upon our campus.

PGC Group 3 has made the decision to take action to improve the habitat of pollinators upon the University of Texas at San Antonio campus. Our focus will be upon renewing the habitat of Monarch Butterflies, which are native to this area. Following the example of the city of San Antonio, which took the National Wildlife Federation's Monarch Butterfly Pledge

in 2016, we will proposition the officials of the University to devote the UTSA to join the same campaign. In order to do so, it is pertinent that we work to reverse the increasing loss of habitat and milkweed for growth and sustenance. Instead, we will do two things: firstly, we will work to encourage the purchasing of naturally harvested milkweed plants that are native to this area. These include Antelope Horn, Green Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, and the Pearl Milkweed vine. Secondly, we will make an effort to join the city's campaign and commit to staying informed. As a group, we have registered to attend the Monarch Joint Venture Annual Partnership Meeting on November 7-9, 2017 at the UTSA campus in downtown San Antonio. By doing this, we hope to raise awareness of the issue on the Main campus and its lack of pollinators. We hope to be able to gain support from inside and outside of the university community by doing so.