



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

2026 South Dakota Master Gardener Conference

Speaker Bios



Heather Holm

Pollinator Conservationist

Heather Holm is a pollinator conservationist and award-winning author of four books: *Pollinators of Native Plants* (2014), *Bees* (2017), *Wasps* (2021), and *Common Native Bees of the Eastern United States* (2022). Both *Bees* and *Wasps* have won multiple book awards including the American Horticultural Society Book Award (2018 and 2022 respectively). She is the founder and chair of Minnesota Native Bees, an online field guide illustrating the native bees of Minnesota and beyond. Heather's expertise includes the interactions between native pollinators and native plants, and the natural history and biology of native bees and predatory wasps. Her work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, and many local publications. Heather is also an accomplished photographer and her pollinator photos are frequently featured in print and electronic publications.

Heather serves on the boards of the following non-profits: Friends of Cullen Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary, Friends of Minnetonka Parks, and the new Minnesota Oak Savanna Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts. In her spare time, she is an active community supporter, writing grants, and coordinating and participating in volunteer ecological landscape restoration projects of fire-dependent ecosystems. The latest project is a 13-acre oak savanna restoration that will provide thriving habitat for pollinators, birds, mammals, and passive, nature-based opportunities for people.

FOLLOW HEATHER ONLINE:

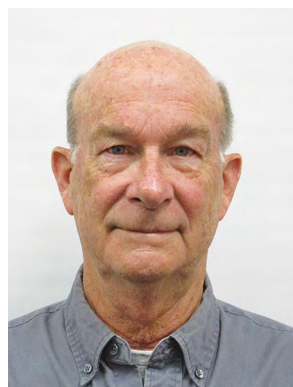
Facebook: [PollinatorsNativePlants](#)

Instagram: [beesnativeplants](#)

YouTube: [@NativeBeesWasps](#)

Photography Website: www.pollinatorphotos.com

iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/people/723565>



John Ball

Professor of Forestry at South Dakota State University

John Ball supports the citizens of South Dakota in his role as a Professor of Forestry; SDSU Extension Forestry Specialist; and South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Forest Health Specialist at the South Dakota State University campus in Brookings. Dr. Ball is a Board Certified Master Arborist and serves as a campus arborist. He is also a Treecare Safety Professional and an Advanced EMT. With more than 40 years of experience, his knowledge and expertise are frequently called upon in other states as well.



Cody Molnar

SDSU Extension Horticulture Plant Pathology Field Specialist

Cody Molnar serves at the horticulture plant pathology specialist for SDSU Extension. He started that position in July 2025 and is focusing on alternaria internal rot in peppers and aster yellows disease as extension driven research topics and works with all diseases of fruits, vegetables, and other horticultural plants. Cody received his Master's in Molecular Biology from Lehigh University in 2014. Cody began his career in plant pathology in 2018 at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, where he surveyed crops for a variety of high-concern diseases and assisted in research on Rapid Apple Decline and Phytophthora associated with the nursery industry. Prior to his current position, he served as a technician at Washington State University in the tree fruit pathology lab from 2021-2025, where he assisted in research on the X-disease phytoplasma and other tree fruit viruses.

Contact: cody.molnar@sdstate.edu | (605) 688-6012



Stephen Robertson

Pesticide Educator for South Dakota State University Extension

Stephen Robertson grew up as a dependent in the Air Force and was lucky to experience a wide array of climates and ecosystems, which hosted an incredible diversity of life. This variety fueled a fascination in the natural world and the biological sciences. He received his doctorate from the University of Arkansas where he researched nocturnal pollination in fruit. Following a short employment with a nonprofit company located in Estelline, Stephen became the Pesticide Educator for South Dakota State University Extension in 2023. In his current role, Stephen is responsible for coordinating the education required for pesticide applicators in South Dakota to maintain their ability to use pesticide chemicals to protect our crops, roadways, public health, and more. Stephen's focus is applicator safety and the appropriate use of pesticides aligned with strong land stewardship to reduce inputs."