

April 2023

Barrington Pollinator Pathway



Welcome to all who are interested in growing the pollinator pathway in Barrington!

As the days grow longer and brighter, we're all getting anxious to get outdoors and into our gardens. Resist this urge! Pollinators are still nesting and seeking warmth and shelter in the leaf litter, brush piles and dead plant stalks you left untouched from last fall. With nighttime temperatures still in the 40's and 50's, it really is too early to clean up. And why bother anyway? Last year's "debris" is this year's mulch and will provide valuable nutrients to your soil as they decompose.

There really is no clear date to go ahead and start in the garden, but if cool season grasses are visibly growing, the soil has probably reached 50 degrees. If you can hold off on mowing (your small patch of grass) and celebrate No Mow May, so much the better for the pollinators in your garden.

The Barrington Pollinator Pathway: Creating Resiliency with Corridors of Habitat

Tuesday, May 23, 1:00pm

Salem Family Auditorium

Barrington Public Library



Join us! We'll be presenting on May 23 about the Pollinator Pathway Project. We'll discuss the ways that you can play an active part in helping to promote the success of the initiative at home and in the community. Focusing on a foundation of adding native pollinator-friendly host plants to your yard and building from there, we'll discuss all of the interconnected ways that managing your property with pollinators, sustainability, resiliency, the environment, and wildlife in mind can have profound positive impacts on enhancing conservation efforts and bolstering biodiversity.

The program will combine presentation and discussion and will feature practical examples of immediate steps residents can take to build more resilient landscapes and join neighbors working to seed change through the Pollinator Pathway effort.

Registration is required, follow the link to reserve an in person or virtual spot:

<https://barringtonlibrary.libcal.com/event/9967365>

The Early Native Plant Sale

Saturday, May 13, 9 am - 2 pm

Casey Farm

2325 Boston Neck Road

Saunderstown, RI

The RI Wild Plant Society will hold its early plant sale featuring hard to find spring ephemerals and early bloomers. Get there early, plants sell out fast!

<https://riwps.org/native-plant-sales/>



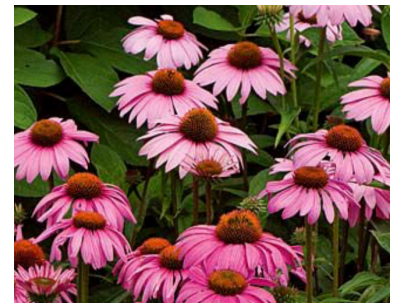
Why not cultivars?

When we talk about planting native plants for pollinators in our yards, we mean straight species – plants grown from seed as you would find them in the wild. These plants have evolved to provide the nectar, pollen, and nesting spots at the right time of year for the various creatures that depend on them. Straight species are identified by their genus and species name; for example, *Monarda fistulosa* is the scientific name for native bee balm.

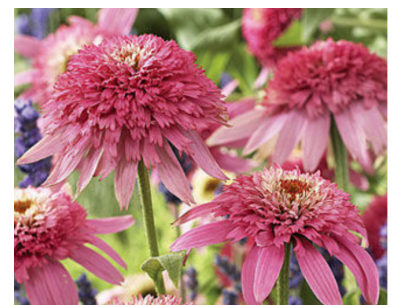
Often, in nurseries, you will see cultivars of native plants. They are given an additional name in single quotes after the genus and species name, such as *Monarda fistula* 'Humdinger'. Sometimes cultivars of native plants are called nativars but they are still cultivars.

Cultivars are plants bred for certain characteristics – like bloom color, height, leaf color and many others. Cultivars are propagated by grafting, cuttings, tissue culture and hybridization. They lack the genetic diversity of plants grown from seed, which makes them less resilient to change in their environment. Sometimes pollinators are not attracted to them because they look or smell different than their native counterparts. In addition, cultivars are often sterile and do not produce the nectar, pollen, or seeds that the native insects and birds need.

Try to plant only straight species of native plants in your pollinator garden. By planting natives, you can be sure that you are providing what the pollinators and birds need and you will be rewarded by seeing all the creatures enjoying your garden.



Purple coneflower (*echinacea purpurea*). This is the straight species. (Xerces Society)



A cultivar of coneflower, which doesn't produce pollen, and whose nectar is inaccessible because of double petals. (Xerces Society)

Pollineighbor Spotlight

Lynne Seacord and Dave Mehl moved to Barrington in 2019 and got to work on their almost acre landscape. Their thinking on gardening and the role it plays in biodiversity has shifted over the years, and is best expressed in Lynne's own words below.

"I've been gardening for over 40 years, but in the last 5 years my attitude toward gardening has changed, even as the planet has changed. Bird and insect populations are declining at an alarming rate because of loss of habitat and widespread use of pesticides and herbicides.

When we moved to Barrington in 2019 we purchased nearly an acre of land graced by stately mature oaks and flanked by conservation land to both the south and the west. In the first year we removed invasive winged euonymus and began to establish beds which we are gradually filling with native shrubs and perennials, reducing the lawn's area as we go.

We are delighted by the sun perennials such as mountain mint and agastache, teeming with multiple species of bees, the half dozen nesting boxes housing fledglings of several species, and the spent echinacea and sunflowers swaying with hungry goldfinches. Even the shady beds teem with life, like the ants which pollinate the wild ginger flowers hidden beneath its leaves.

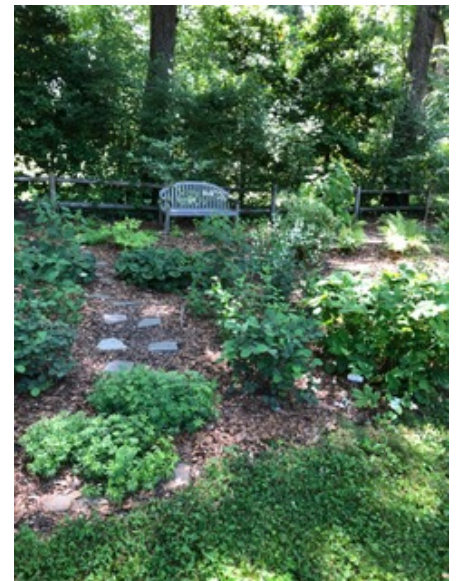
We have found that gardening for wildlife habitat need not mean sacrificing beauty or traditional design aesthetics. We find our gardens beautiful. At the same time we embrace the "messiness" of oak leaves left in the beds and milkweed leaves chewed by monarch caterpillars."



A sunny bed includes liatris, echinacea, rudbeckia, agastache and vervain.



Woodland garden bed before planting.



Second summer in, the bed includes witch hazel, goat's beard and golden ragwort.



Celandine poppy in the foreground, with woodland phlox, native columbine and spiderwort.



Books that inspired their journey:

Rick Darke & Doug Tallamy: *The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden*

Uli Lorimer: *The Northeast Native Plant Primer: 235 Plants for an Earth-Friendly Garden*



Please share this newsletter with a friend or neighbor, and if you're not on the pollinator pathway map yet, please consider joining!

<https://www.pollinator-pathway.org>

Please reach out to us with questions, newsletter ideas, or photos of your own pollinator garden. You can reach us at education@blct.org.



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