

# **POLLINATOR PLANTINGS**

## **Native Plants Grow Engagement with Open Space**

While writing their Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Tewksbury Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee (OSRPC) realized that protecting local open space wasn't sufficient. They needed to get their community excited about open spaces.

Noticing local buzz for pollinator protection, the OSRPC saw an opportunity. They planted seven native plant gardens that promote natural pollinator habit while giving residents a new way to engage with open space.

### **HOW IT HAPPENED**

Through partnership with the Tewksbury Cultural Council, the OSRPC received a \$2,000 grant from the Mass Cultural Council.

The grant request generated strong local support. Planting sites were chosen by reaching out to other town organizations such as the garden club, the library, and schools. Ultimately, the OSRPC chose to establish native planting sites at the high school, one elementary school, and on OSRPC-managed properties – some at trailheads and some deeper in the woods.



An OSRPC member unloads pollinator plants

### **PLANTING POLLINATORS: TIPS AND TRICKS**

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Reach out to a variety of town organizations – libraries, schools, and senior centers – to identify pollinator sites

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Order plugs and seeds early! Native plant suppliers often need advance notice for large orders and can sell out by early spring

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Be cautious planting in areas with high foot traffic – plants may get trampled before they're fully established



Native species plugs from the Native Plant Trust

Funds were used to buy seven native plant kits from the [Native Plant Trust](#). Each kit contained 70 to 80 plugs ready for planting and had species pre-tailored to different types of sites (full sun, partial sun, or wetland conditions). This saved a significant amount of time that would have been required to research and choose native plants.

Prior to planting, OSRPC members prepped each planting site by cleaning up trash (a particular problem at trailheads) and removing invasive species. Sites deeper in the woods needed less prep but required mindfulness. While native plants were being used, the OSRPC didn't want to replace what was already there: instead, they strove to choose a site where a garden would be an addition to the landscape.

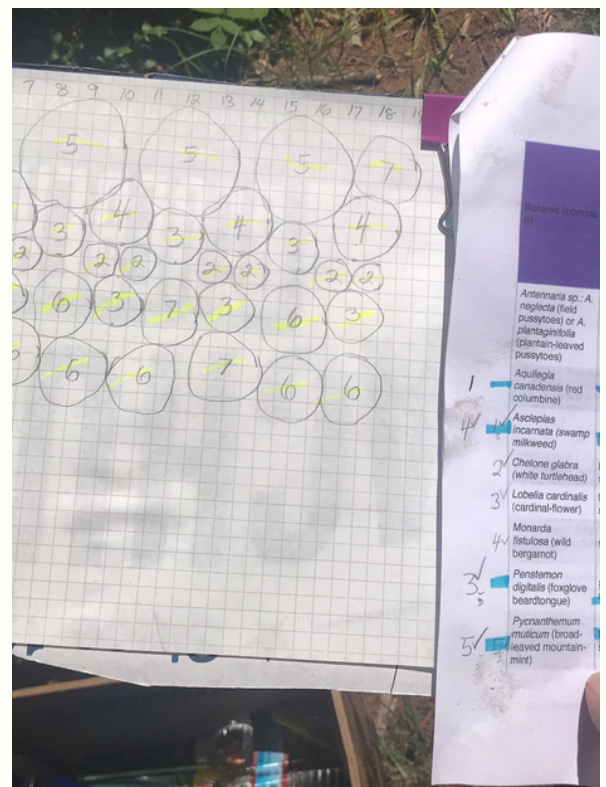
After plugs were delivered, OSRPC members conducted plantings at each site – sometimes individually, sometimes in small, socially-distanced groups. Once planted, sites initially needed lots of watering due to a hot and dry summer. However, as native plants, they're expected to naturally adapt and require only minimal maintenance over time.

The project was shared in the local paper, the town newsletter, and on social media. While planting sites are still young, OSRPC members have already noted significant community interest in each garden.

### LOOKING AHEAD: NEXT STEPS

In coming years, the OSRPC hopes to create additional native plant gardens at other sites such as the senior center. Once the original plantings are well established and germinating, seeds can be gathered and used to expand to these new locations.

This growth will also offer new ways for the community to get involved with open space. The OSRPC had planned to allow community volunteers to plant the initial gardens.



Diagramming sites for each new plant

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While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented this, interested residents will be able to help maintain sites, gather seeds, and create new native plant sites once it's safe to do so. By opening plantings to volunteers and utilizing the first pilot gardens for seed, the project can further expand.

### CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the project after its first year, the Tewksbury OSRPC's only regret was not starting a pollinator project sooner. The work increased community engagement, provided new partnerships, and improved open space habitat, all with minimal funding. Overall, the OSRPC described pollinator gardens as "a blast!" to put together.



Planting pollinators in a forest environment

Thank you to Chris Mullins and Jennifer Balch-Kenney of the Tewksbury Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee for sharing the story and photos of their pollinator work

