

# *Cultivating a Greener Future: New Pollinator Habitat Initiative*

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In a proactive effort to enhance biodiversity and support pollinator populations, the Conservation Department has launched an exciting new initiative to create pollinator habitats across our conservation lands.

This innovative project not only aims to beautify our natural spaces but also serves as a crucial step towards preserving local ecosystems, and joins efforts across the Commonwealth and the country to protect a multitude of pollinator species against increasing threats. These pollinator gardens offer a multitude of benefits to our community and environment. They provide crucial food sources for pollinators, a key feature of climate resiliency, which help native habitats and biodiversity thrive while also providing invaluable support to agriculture. Additionally, the gardens contribute to the overall beauty of our conservation lands, offering residents and visitors alike a serene and picturesque natural environment to enjoy.

The project began with a unique approach, as staff and volunteers dismantled an unauthorized treehouse that had been constructed on conservation land. This endeavor not only restored the integrity of the protected area but also provided valuable materials we were able to recycle into this project. The recovered wood, combined with plexiglass shielding previously used during the Covid-19 pandemic, was repurposed by a

volunteer with carpentry skills, who constructed three cold frame boxes at very little cost. These structures now serve as small-scale greenhouses, allowing us to extend the growing season and protect the seedlings against frost.

Thanks to a generous contribution of seeds from Sudbury Valley Trustees, we were also able to acquire the most critical component of the project at no cost. These seeds were sown into recycled household materials such as milk jugs, egg cartons, and other plastic containers, adding to our commitment to sustainability and further reducing the costs of this project. If you are to try this at home, we definitely recommend larger containers, as they had far higher rates of germination, as the small amount of soil held in the egg cartons made maintaining moisture levels very difficult.



# *Pollinator Habitat Initiative, cont.*

One of the key techniques employed in this project is “cold stratification,” a process that involves exposing seeds to periods of cold temperature. This method breaks down the seed coating, simulating the conditions necessary for germination in the wild. By employing this technique, we ensured the optimal growth and development of our native plant species. We attempted multiple methods of germination, and those species that we cold stratified outside showed a much higher rate of sprouting than the other methods we attempted.

Our ultimate goal is to establish multiple pollinator gardens across various conservation properties, including Carding Mill and Lincoln Meadows, as well as expanding the existing pollinator garden established by an Eagle Scout project at Davis Farm. These gardens will not only provide essential habitats for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators but will also serve as a self-sustaining seed bank for future growth, allowing us to extend the program year after year while keeping costs to a minimum. With each passing growing season, we aim to expand this program, creating a vast network of pollinator gardens that span public lands all across town.



Furthermore, as the Conservation Department intensifies its efforts to treat and remove invasive species, the availability of a stock of native plants becomes invaluable. By promptly replacing invasives with native species, we greatly reduce the risk of invasive species resurgence, ensuring the long-term health of our ecosystems.

As we continue to forge ahead with this initiative, we invite members of the community to join us in our efforts. Whether through volunteering, planting their own gardens, or simply spreading the word, together, we can create a greener, more vibrant future for our town and its natural inhabitants.

