

Evolve Your Lawn

Start Growing Natives in Your Backyard

With Angela Sisson

Hosted by the Town of Gardiner ECC At the Gardiner Library



How to get started with ecological landscaping

healthier more wildlife friendly backyard

-Steps to take to get started -Resources including design book pdf plant list spreadsheet organizations-websites plant sources

-Pollinator pathways

Wallkill Valley Pollinator Pathway Wallkill Valley Land Trust & WV Rail Trail









Why we're here now...we have a problem

-Insect & bird populations have declined steeply. Causes: climate change, habitat & biodiversity loss, insecticides

-90% of all plants—not just food plants—are insect-pollinated

-Insects perform 95% of pollination moths-butterflies, bees-wasps, flies, beetles

-96% of songbirds feed their young insect larvae insects link in food web between plants and animals

-Insects are The Little Things That Run the World E.O. Wilson



Traditional landscaping – part of the problem we have control over

-yard clean up removes habitat

-leaf blowing

(don't alienate landscapers—we need them) -over mulching (mulch volcanoes kill trees) -tilling

-pesticide use (insecticides)

-exotic plants are the norm



HOW TO MULCH RESPONSIBLY?



Ecological Landscaping – part of the solution

-Pollinator pathways gateway to healthier eco-friendly landscaping Focus on saving pollinators empowering people

-Common catchphrases

-Leave the leaves (most difficult change to make)
-Lawn reduction & pollinator meadows
-No-till gardening & hugelkultur
-Rewilding
-Plant native





Why are native plants so important?

Coevolution between plant & insect -Insect-pollinated plants both attract and repel insects -Attract adult insects with nectar in flowers -Repel baby insects with toxins in leaves -Adaptation and specialists Monarchs, adapted to milkweed toxins -Monarchs and swallow-wort

Pollinators can eat nectar from both natives & exotics -Specialist pollinators can only eat leaves of native host -Most pollination is performed by specialist insects -Most insects need native plants to reproduce

Coevolution and exotic invasive plant species -Natural predators





Problem lawns

Lawns require inputs:

Chemicals—pesticides & fertilizers Dead zone in Gulf of Mexico-fertilizers Watering—turf grass is cool season suited to British climate Mowing—short mowing, shallow roots increases storm-water runoff Default groundcover #1 Crop in the US

Functional lawns

Turf grass is a resilient surface—handles foot traffic Recreation, circulation, trails, edging

Area rug vs. wall-to-wall carpet

Reduce inputs

No chemicals or watering Mow higher for deeper roots No-mow mixes (Prairie Moon)





Solutions— Change how we landscape

Steps you can take:

-Join a pollinator pathway Pathways focus on landscaping practices

-Pollinator pathways, recent grassroots movement Triggered by recent awareness of insect loss





Pollinator **pathway** concept

-Insects need to eat as they travel -Backyards – corridor of pit stops

Joining a pollinator pathway is easy

- 1. Start planting native species.
- 2. Start removing invasive species.
- 3. Avoid using pesticides, especially insecticides.



Different ways of learning

-Different stages -Find something that works for you

We arrive here from different backgrounds

-edible gardening
-horticulture
-wildlife gardening
-into bugs
-birding
-rail trails
-watershed groups
-natural landscaping

TYPES OF LEARNERS*





My gardening background

-40 years ago, Ruth Stout's book
-started w/vegetables
-flowers & wildlife
-beauty of flowers is gateway to nature

Backyard Wildlife Habitat (early 80s)
 Gardening pushed to background

 but remained a passion
 Conway School degree (2004)
 turning point
 New landscaping concepts & methods
 perennial meadows (not annuals)
 Pollinator pathway program (2020)
 help other people get started
 not gardening alone



Gardiner Library Pollinator Garden

-500 square-foot perennial garden
-Lawn being smothered w/plastic tarp
-Planting this spring with landscape plugs into dead lawn
-Planted densely—one plant/square foot plants replace mulch



Ecological landscaping methods at Library

 -Planting native species
 -Spacing close to suppress weeds eliminate need for mulch
 -Smothering avoids pesticides and tilling disturbance encourages invasive plants destroys soil structure & micro-organisms

-Reduced maintenance overall Watering & weeding first season

-Public gardens require some maintenance Public perception can be critical to success Neat edges indicate caring-Signs indicate intentional







Public places—Rail Trails

-Library Garden is on the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail -Rail Trail recreational use—more exposure

 Rail Trails are also wildlife corridors making them pollinator pathways
 Effort to promote more pollinator habitat on rail trails



May 2022 - Gardiner Library Pollinator Events

-May 13th (Rain date May 14th)

Library Pollinator Garden Planting Come join us for the planting Learn more about planting for pollinators

-May 21st

Native Plant Sale

Opportunity to purchase inexpensive perennials Buy & see the same species planted in the garden Future sales can include trees & shrubs



The Doug Tallamy Section

-Main spokesperson for the native plant cause

-Inspired more people than anyone else

-7 steps to get you started



With a Foreword by Rick Darke



DOUGLAS W. TALLAMY Author of Bringing Nature Home





Take one or more of these steps

- Plant native pollinator gardens and meadows.
 Pollinators require mostly native plants to reproduce, and 90% of all plants require pollinating insects to reproduce.
- 2. Remove existing **invasive** plant species and do not plant them.
- 3. Avoid **pesticides** especially insecticides.

Homeowners use 10 times as much pesticide per acre as farmers

4. Reduce our lawns by half—

We have 40 million acres of lawn in the US. If we could reduce our lawns by half, this "Homegrown National Park" would be larger than our largest national parks combined.





5. Turn lights out

Light pollution is killing moths and nocturnal insects. Recent reports & studies

For safety and security Try motion lights. Or try down-lighting.





Bad, better, best

Use outdoor lighting responsibly by only using it where it's needed, when it's needed, and in the amount required. Use the lowest light level required, limit blue-violet light, utilize timers or motion sensors, and use shielding.



WHAT ARE KEYSTONE PLANTS?

Keystone plants are native plants that support a significant number of caterpillars (butterfly and moth larvae). Planting keystone plants helps build complex food webs by forming the essential foundation — native plants and insects — that provide food for other organisms, directly and indirectly.



Art: Elsa Cousins

6. Plant keystone species

Keystone species make up -5% of native plants yet they **host** -75% of our caterpillars.

The top keystone species are:

-oaks (host over 500 species of caterpillars), -willows, birch, poplars, cherries, maples.

7. Create soft landings under trees

This allows insects to complete their development

Insects have 4 life stages—egg, larvae, pupae, and adult. Caterpillars drop beneath trees to pupate.

Replace lawn under trees with groundcovers or shrubs

SOFT LANDINGS

Soft landings are diverse native plantings under keystone trees (or any other regionally appropriate native tree). These plantings provide critical shelter and habitat for one or more life cycle stages of moths, butterflies, and beneficial insects such as bumble bees, fireflies, lacewings, and beetles. In addition to plants, *soft landings* also include leaf litter, duff, and plant debris.





Funded by a grant from Wild Ones Minnesota. ©2021 Heather Holm and Neighborhood Greening. Developed in consultation with Desiree Narango, Ph.D.; artwork by Elsa Cousins. * For more on creating soft landings under trees, visit: www.PollinatorsNativePlants.com/softlandings.html



One other thinginitiated the research

A ratio of 70% native plants in the landscape

is enough to sustain insect pollinators

This is important because-



Evolve Your Lawn – Start with a small garden project

9 Design templates from the booklet—
-Corner Garden
-Small Water Feature
-Container Garden
-Sidewalk Strip Garden
-Downspout Garden
-Rock Wall Garden
-Mailbox Garden
-Front Porch Garden
-Back Patio Garden

Designs have a range of conditions from sunny to shady and wet to dry.



Right Plant – Right Place

Match the plant to the conditions. Do not change the conditions to match the plant. Like Mother Nature

What are your site conditions?



Site Analysis

-Existing conditions, sun, water, soil, plants Designers are trained Seems daunting But homeowners already know plants-harder to know

-First step to understanding your property

-Benefit of joining the WVPP people want to know their property



Ulster County Parcel Viewer

-Tool for map users
-Lots of online property info soils, wetlands, geology
-2021 aerial view—high resolution



DESIGN TEMPLATES

Container Garden

Can support pollinators

Three types or sizes: tall, filler, spiller one species per type

Only two conditions: sunny or shady no distinction for wet or dry

Plant alternatives several options for each condition

Helpful hints:

- Containers are often planted with a tall plant, a plant that fills the pot and one that spills over the brim. These varying heights are attractive, but you can also use a single plant for good effect.

- Pots should have drainage holes in the bottom, be deep enough for root growth, and wide enough so that plants aren't crowded.

- Large pots work best, but make sure they aren't too heavy. Add wheels to pots to be able to move them around easily.



Bottlebrush grass (Elymus hystrix)

Container Garden - 2

Natives are perennials, not annuals Focus on foliage, then flowers Search images using scientific name

Try out in containers first Move on to larger project

DESIGN TEMPLATES

CONTAINER GARDEN

A container garden can instantly add interest to any outdoor space.

Container gardens are versatile for small yards, patios, decks and porches. They can be placed alone or in groups. Arrange containers close to your favorite outdoor spot so you can enjoy them. The color pallet of natives is often more subtle, like that found in nature. So it's easy to mix things together and have them look good.



Mailbox Garden

45 square feet vs. 7 sf

More public exposure –

get neighbors on board counter negative perceptions of neglected, messy

DESIGN TEMPLATES



Dress up your mailbox with native perennials that will draw butterflies.



DESIGN TEMPLATES

Mailbox Garden - 2

Three sizes again: tall, medium, short

Four conditions:

sunny dry or wet (sunny dry) shady dry or wet

Determine site conditions per analysis determine plant selections

Helpful hints:

- Use plants that will tolerate and thrive in the conditions you have.

- Plant the big stuff first. Account for full size when planting and spacing. Then fill in with smaller plants.



Mailbox Garden - 3

Plant alternatives several options for each condition some plants are generalists

Try pocket garden first then Go bigger & closer

DESIGN TEMPLATES MAILBOX GARDEN

PLANT ALTERNATIVES:

drier and more shade

Canada anemone

Green and gold

Alumroot

Medium:

(Zizia aurea)

Sneezeweed

Tall:

(Anemone canadensis)

(Heuchera americana)

Golden Alexanders

(Helenium autumnale)

Golden Alexanders

(Chrysogonum virginianum)

Short:

wetter and more shade

Short: Maidenhair fern (Adiantum pedatum) Canada anemone (Anemone canadensis) Foam flower

(Tiarella cordifolia)

Medium: Lady fern (Athyrium filix-femina) Royal fern

(Osmunda regalis) **Golden Alexanders** (Zizia aurea)

Swallowtail Butterfly

Tall: Sneezeweed (Helenium autumnale) wetter and more sun Short

Canada anemone (Anemone conadensis)

Pink Coreopsis (Coreopsis rosea) Wild geranium

(Geranium maculatum)

Medium:

Golden Alexanders (Zizia aurea)

Tall:

Blazing Star (Liatris spicata) Garden Phlox (Phlox paniculata)

Purple Blazing Star







Brandes, D

Front Porch Garden

Foundation garden—against house In your view - appreciated Maintained

200 square feet - 45 sf - 7 sf

FRONT PORCH GARDEN

Gardens in the front of the house are often the ones we want looking the best since they are what most people see. Native plants can enhance the beauty of your home and landscaping.





Front Porch Garden - 2

Three sizes again: tall, medium, short

Four conditions:

shady dry or wet (shady wet) sunny dry or wet

Determine site conditions per analysis Larger gardens may have different conditions

DESIGN TEMPLATES

Helpful hint: - Use plants that aren't so tall that they obscure the view from your porch.



FRONT PORCH GARDEN

Front Porch Garden - 3

Plant alternatives several options for each condition some plants are generalists

Perennial garden butlarger gardens handle shrubs small shrub in medium group.

short:	Short:	Short:		
Canada anemone Anemone canadensis)	Nodding onion (Allium cernuum)	Canada anemone (Anemone canadensis)		
Green and gold Chrysogonum virginianum)	Butterfly weed (Asclepias tuberosa)	Pink Coreopsis (Coreopsis rosea)		
Alumroot Heuchera americana)	Threadleaf coreopsis (Coreopsis verticillata)	Wild geranium (Geranium maculatum)		
Allegheny pachysandra Pachysandra procumbens)	Alumroot (Heuchera americana)			
	Sundrops	Medium:		
Medium:	(Oenothera fruticosa)	Dwarf fothergila (small shrub) (Fothergilla gardenii)		
Bottlebrush Grass Elymus hystrix)	Medium:	Meadowsweet (Spiraea alba)		
	New Jersey tea (small shrub) (Ceanothus americanus)	Swamp milkweed (Asclepias incarnata)		
fall:	Sweet fern	Great blue lobelia		
neezeweed	(Comptonia peregrina)	(Lobelia siphilitica)		
increment documinate)	Blue star amsonia (Amsonia hubrichtii)			
Bottlebrush Grass	Beardtongue penstemon	Tall:		
	(Penstemon digitalis)	Beebalm (Monarda didyma)		
	La service de la constante de	Cardinal flower		
	Tall:	(Lobelia cardinalis)		
	(Agastache foeniculum)	Deadlet		
+ lant	Blue false indigo	Dwarr tothergila		
	(Baptisia australis)			
	(Ratibida pinnata)	No. of the second se		
MC	Little bluestem			
	(Schizachyrium scoparium)	New Market State		
ALL INTERNATION	1			

Native Plants for the Small Yard: Easy, Beautiful Home Gardens that Support Local Ecology

PLANT ALTERNATIVES:

Adjustments to design templates

Great starter designs everything can be improved

Too many species listed in alternatives limit—one tall, six total too busy, lose legibility

Diversity is good not a meadow cottage gardens are difficult

PLANT ALTERNATIVES:

drier and more shade

Short: Canada anemone (Anemone canadensis) Green and gold (Chrysogonum virginianum) Alumroot (Heuchera americana) Allegheny pachysandra (Pachysandra procumbens)

Medium:

Bottlebrush Grass (Elymus hystrix)

Tall: Sneezeweed (Helenium autumnale)

Bottlebrush Grass



DESIGN TEMPLATES

wetter and more sun

Short: Canada anemone (Anemone canadensis)

Pink Coreopsis (Coreopsis rosea)

drier and more sun

Short:

Nodding onion

(Allium cernuum)

Butterfly weed

Alumroot

Sundrops

Medium:

Sweet fern

Tall: Anise hyssop (Agastache foeniculum)

(Asclepias tuberosa)

Threadleaf coreopsis

(Coreopsis verticillata)

(Heuchera americana)

(Oenothera fruticosa)

New Jersey tea (small shrub)

(Ceanothus americanus)

(Comptonia peregrina)

Beardtongue penstemon

Blue star amsonia (Amsonia hubrichtii)

(Penstemon digitalis)

Blue false indigo (Baptisia australis) Grey-headed coneflower (Ratibida pinnata) Little bluestem (Schizachyrium scoparium) Wild geranium (Geranium maculatum)

Medium:

Dwarf fothergila (small shrub) (Fothergilla gardenii)

Meadowsweet (Spiraea alba)

Swamp milkweed (Asclepias incarnata)

Great blue lobelia (Lobelia siphilitica)

Tall:

Beebalm (Monorda didyma)

Cardinal flower (Lobelia cardinalis)

Dwarf fothergila



Adjustments to design templates – 2

Plant spacing – needs to be closer Grid shows 2 feet apart Plants should be about 1 foot on center

Check North Creek Nursery for spacing

Closer spacing suppresses weeds plants knit together above & below ground



DESIGN TEMPLATES

Helpful hints:

- Use plants that will tolerate and thrive in the conditions you have.

- Plant the big stuff first. Account for full size when planting and spacing. Then fill in with smaller plants.



Adjustments to design templates – 3

Don't use aggressive plants in gardens Anemone canadensis Good for edging, monocultures

Plant lists in booklet Good but may be difficult to use

Providing list of native perennials Includes size & conditions Match to designs



List of Native Perennials

d	A	В	C	D	E	F	G	Н
1	Scientific Name	Common Name	Height	Moisture	Sun	Bloom season	Color	Comments
2								
3	Amsonia 'Blue Ice'	Blue Ice	1-1.5 feet	moist-dry	full - part-shade	May	blue	compact for edging *
4	Aquilegia canadensis	Columbine	2 feet	moist-dry	full - shade	Ap, May, June	red	sandy area @ dining
5	Asclepias incarnata	Swamp Milkweed	2-4 feet	wet-moist	full - It shade	summer	white and pink	
6	Asclepias tuberosa	Butterfly Weed	1-3 feet	avg-dry (DT)	full - part	summer	orange	
7	Aster (Symphyotrichum oblongifolium)	Aromatic Aster	2 feet	dry to med	full -	Sept-Oct	violet - blue	
8	Aster laevis	Smooth Aster	1-3 feet	moist-dry	full - part	fall	violet	
9	Aster novae-angliae	New England Aster	2-6 feet	moist	full - part	fall	violet - purple	
10	Baptisia australis	Blue False Indigo	3-4 feet	moist-dry	full - part	spring	violet - blue	
11	Chelone glabra	White Turtlehead	3 feet	wet-moist	full - part	late summer-fall	white	
12	Chrysogonum virginianum	Golden Star/Green & Gold	6-12 inch	moist-dry	part - shade	May - Oct	yellow	groundcover, banks
13	Coreopsis verticillata	Threadleaf Tickseed	1-2 feet	moist-dry	full - part	summer	light yellow	(NJ)*
14	Echinacea purpurea	Purple Coneflower	2-3 feet	moist	full - part	summer	rose	
15	Eupatorium dubium 'Little Joe'		3-4 feet		sun - part	July - Sept	mauve	*
16	Eupatorium fistulosum	Hollow-stemmed JP Weed	3-8 feet	wet-moist	full - part	late summer	mauve	
17	Eupatorium maculatum	Spotted Joe Pye Weed	3-9 feet	moist	full - part	late summer	mauve	dramatic
18	Geum fragarioides (Waldesteinia)	Barren Strawberry	3-6 inch	moist-dry	full - shade	April-May	yellow	evergreen groundcover
19	Helianthus divaricatus	Woodland Sunflower	4 feet	moist - dry	part - shade	Jul, Aug, Sept	yellow	aggressive, rhizo
20	Heuchera americana	Alumroot	1-2 feet	moist-dry	full - It shade	early summer	cream	check species
21	Iris cristata	Crested Iris	8 inches	moist	full - shade	April-May	violet	groundcover (PA)*
22	Iris versicolor	Blue Flag	3-4 feet	wet-moist	full - It shade	late spring	blue-violet	wetland garden
23	Liatris scariosa	Northern Blazing star	2-4 feet	dry	full	summer	pink-purple	
24	Liatris spicata	Gayfeather, Marsh Blazing Star	2-4 feet	wet-moist	full - part	July - Aug	pink-purple	wetland & average soil
25	Lilium philadelphicum	Wood Lily	1 foot	moist-dry	full - part	July, Aug	orange	
26	Lilium superbum	Turk's Cap Lily	3-8 feet	wet-moist	full - part	summer	red-orange	
27	Lobelia cardinalis	Cardinal Flower	2-4 feet	wet-moist	full - It shade	July-Sept	crimson	needs disturbance
28	Lobelia siphilitica	Great Blue Lobelia	2-3 feet	wet-moist	full - part	late summer	blue	
29	Lupinus perennis	Sundial Lupine	1-2 feet	avg-dry (DT)	full - part	May-June-July	blue-violet	short-lived, self-sows
30	Maianthemum racemosum	False Solomon's Seal	1-3 feet	moist	full - shade	April, May, June	white	rhizotomous
31	Mertensia virginica	Virginia Bluebells	1-2 feet	moist (spring)	part - shade	April	pink to blue	
32	Monarda didyma	Bee Balm, Oswego Tea	3-4 feet	moist	full - It shade	summer	scarlet	
33	Monarda fistulosa	Wild Bergamot	3-4 feet	moist	full - It shade	summer	violet	aggressive
34	Monarda punctata	Dotted Mint	24-30 inches	avg-dry (DT)	full - It shade	July, Aug, Sept	purple	
35	Opuntia humifusa	Eastern prickly pear	6 inches	dry	full - part	June, July	yellow	
36	Packera obovata	Roundleaf ragwort	6-18 inches	well-drain	sun - shade	May - June	yellow	
37	Penstemon digitalis	Foxglove Beardtongue	2-4 feet	moist	full - It shade	spring	white	
38	Penstemon hirsutus	Hairy Beardtongue	12-18 inches	moist-dry	full - part	early summer	violet	
39	Phlox divaricata	Wild Blue Phlox	1 foot	moist	nart - shade	May	blue-violet	enhemeral part die-back

In Conclusion – Ways to Get Started

Join the Wallkill Valley Pollinator Pathway

Gardiner Library's Garden planting (May 13th or 14th) Native plant sale (May 21st)

Take one or more of these steps

- 1- Plant native
- 2- Remove invasive plants
- 3- Avoid pesticides
- 4- Reduce the lawn
- 5- Turn out lights
- 6- Plant keystone species
- 7- Create soft landings

Plant a native garden from the design book

Read articles & watch webinars - from the resource list

Hands-on workshops coming up

-Winter seed planting at Library (January 14, 2023) -Seed collecting at Library (October & November 2022)



Resources

Planting Guides

 -Design Booklet—Native Plants for the Small Yard (pdf) (https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/native-garden-designs)
 -List of Native Perennials (spreadsheet)

Wallkill Valley Pollinator Pathway (https://wallkillvalleylt.org/pp/)

Ecological Gardening and Native Plant Organizations

(check out these websites and join their mailing lists)

-Northeast Pollinator Pathway (https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/)

-Woodstock Pollinator Pathway (https://woodstocknypollinatorpathway.org/)

-Healthy Yards (https://www.healthyyards.org/)

-Ecological Landscaping Association (https://www.ecolandscaping.org/)

-The Wild Seed Project (https://wildseedproject.net/)

-Wild Ones (https://wildones.org/)

-Xerces Society (https://www.xerces.org/)

-Homegown National Park (Doug Tallamy) (https://homegrownnationalpark.org/)

Resources - 2

Native Plant Sources-Seeds

-Prairie Moon Nursery (https://www.prairiemoon.com/)
-Prairie Nursery (https://www.prairienursery.com/)
-Wild Seed Project (https://wildseedproject.net/)

Native Plant Sources-Plants

-Catskill Native Nursery (local) – They're hiring! -Prairie Moon & Prairie Nursery sell small & bare root plants -Small local nurseries—ask about natives (not big box)

Plant Identification

-Apps (can make mistakes): Seek (Free); PictureThis (\$30) -Books: Newcomb's Wildflowers, Weeds of the Northeast

What's native here?

-USDA plants database (https://plants.usda.gov/home)

-NYS Flora (https://newyork.plantatlas.usf.edu/)

-NWF Plantfinder (https://www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder/)

What's invasive in New York?

-NYS Invasive plants (https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/isprohibitedplants2.pdf)

Ulster County Parcel Viewer (https://ulstercountyny.gov/maps/parcel-viewer/?)

Thank You

Gardiner Library and Gardiner ECC

For hosting this event and for all your help

And thanks to all of you for joining us!





If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Angela Sisson pollinators@wallkillvalleylt.org