

SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER



Pollinator Pathway

THE BUZZ



Spring Flowering Trees: A Lifeline for Native Bees

Spring flowering trees are a welcome sight for gardeners after a long winter, but even more so for hungry pollinators!

This month, take a moment to look at the spring flowering trees in your neighborhood; they may be buzzing with early-emerging pollinators like [cellophane bees](#), [mining bees](#), and [queen bumblebees](#). Native bees awaken from winter hibernation with an urgent need to find enough food to both nourish themselves and create new colonies. **Early-flowering trees and shrubs play a critical role in helping them survive and thrive.**

Whatever the size of your garden, adding a spring-blooming tree or shrub is a high-impact, low-maintenance way to beautify your space AND help early pollinators.

[Search here](#) for native trees and shrubs in your region and for examples of early-bloomers and their bloom times for the northeast.

In this issue of **The Buzz**, we feature more inspirational stories from the Pathway community; ideas on how to make No Mow May work for you; Citizen Science opportunities, and more!

Photo: Bumblebee on Eastern Redbud tree (Karalyn Lamb)

Planting Ideas

Native Willows

Don't Overlook this Beautiful Pollinator "Superfood"



As **Keystone Plants**, native willows are extremely valuable for wildlife. Entomologist Douglas Tallamy ranks native willows as **the number two woody plant family** – after oaks – in their ability to support lepidoptera (butterflies and moths). And according to Dr. Robert Geegar of the **Beecology Project**, **early-blooming native willows** are important nectar and pollen sources for at-risk bee and butterfly species.

So how can we incorporate more of these beautiful and critically important native trees and shrubs into our landscapes? Naturalist Cathy Smith has the answers **[here](#)**.

Photo: Two-spotted Bumblebee on Pussy Willow (Karalyn Lamb)

Small Flowering Trees: A Dozen Native Species for Limited Spaces

From the Wild Seed Project

A small tree can bring beauty and diversity into your yard while taking up very little space. One could be planted next to your doorway, at the edge of your driveway, in the narrow strip between the sidewalk and the street, in a bed by your patio or even in a large pot on your deck.

Planting a small tree is a pleasurable task. You do not need to have gardening experience to tackle this, and it is a great way for people who do not consider themselves gardeners to support other creatures from our local ecoregion and will help draw them into your home landscape.



[Read the full article](#), which includes a **list of small native trees plus planting instructions.**

Photo: Eastern redbud trees beautify a parking lot in spring. (Karalyn Lamb)

Native Plants and Your Vegetable Garden

**Did you know native companion plants help with
pollination of fruits and vegetables?**



Non-native honeybees are important pollinators of many of our food crops, but numerous species of native bees and other pollinating insects are significant as well.

In fact, many native bees—of a variety sizes and shapes—are the only insects that pollinate certain species. **For example, bumblebees have the amazing ability to “buzz pollinate” tomatoes - a talent that honeybees lack.**

Studies show that tomatoes pollinated by bumblebees produce bigger and more numerous fruit.

Get started with this “Native Plants Help Fruits and Vegetables Thrive” fact sheet from the Missouri Prairie Foundation.

The Warblers are Returning - and They Need INSECTS!



April for most of us means the exciting return of brightly colored [warblers](#), “the butterflies of the bird world,” who undertake a perilous migration northward every spring from their wintering grounds in Central and South America. They are following the “Green Wave” of spring tree leaf-out and the flush of insects that accompanies it.

Even small yards can act as [refueling stations](#) for these beautiful birds, as long as the native plants necessary to support their insectivorous diets are present.

Planting [Keystone Native Trees](#) like oaks and birches is a good way to ensure that warblers have the insect protein they need to thrive and reproduce. Find keystone plants by ecoregion [here](#).

For ideas on how to incorporate Keystone trees into your landscape, check out this [beginner-friendly plant list](#), as well as this informative video: [Keystone Species of Native Plants](#), from the Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia.

Photo of Common Yellowthroat warbler with caterpillars courtesy of Steve Rappaport.

Show Us Your Pathway Pride!

We LOVE seeing Pollinator Pathway signs displayed in gardens! Send a photo of your sign, or one you come across, to info@pollinator-pathway.org, with a brief note of plants featured. We will use as many as we can in our newsletter and social media platforms. Don't have a sign? Order one [here](#).



Planting along the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, Cheshire, CT: coneflower, rudbeckia, anise hyssop, asters, and more!



Hellstrip planting, Westchester County NY: 'Heavy Metal' Switchgrass, Common Milkweed, Butterflyweed and Anise Hyssop.

News from the Pathway

The Bronx is Blooming... and Buzzing!

The Bronx is Blooming (BiB), founded in 2011 by Executive Director Jennifer Beaugrand, is a Bronx-based nonprofit dedicated to environmental stewardship, youth leadership development, and community building. They are working to cultivate a community of environmental stewards in the Bronx in New York City to address long-standing environmental justice issues.

Through their efforts, **BiB highlights the importance of planting native, pollinator-supporting plants in Bronx parks and green spaces**, rather than more traditionally-used flowering plants that provide little ecological benefit and can even be ecologically damaging.





River Birch

Betula nigra



Flowering dogwood

Cornus florida



Last year, Bronx youth, community members, and other volunteers planted more than 2,000 native flowers and more than 600 trees and shrubs in local parks!

[Read more](#) about The Bronx is Blooming's inspiring efforts to mobilize communities to invest in their parks and green spaces.

Follow BiB on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for fun features like Native Plant Wednesday, Tree Tuesday and Native Plant Knockout (left).

Hellstrips Become a Pollinator Paradise in Maine



“Hellstrips,” the narrow strip of land between the street and the sidewalk, are some of the most inhospitable environments for plants.

Thirsty, high-maintenance turf grass seldom thrives in these conditions. Often better-suited are hardy native plants which can tolerate the harsh conditions. In Kennebunk, Maine, Lisa Pagano spearheaded the conversion of multiple hellstrips in the village as a way of bringing community members together following recent years of Covid separation. Lisa saw the potential to add beauty to these neglected areas as well as create valuable pollinator habitat.

[Read more about Lisa’s inspiring efforts to connect people and pollinators.](#)

For more information about how to plant a hellstrip garden, check out this Wild Seed Project article:

[Hellstrip Plantings: Creating Habitat Between the Sidewalk and the Curb.](#)

**Building Community and Reclaiming Habitat
to Make a Bird and Pollinator Refuge in Mamaroneck, NY**

It all started when more than 130 common milkweed plants were spotted last year during a survey of a potential restoration site on the Sheldrake River in Mamaroneck, NY. The Village of Mamaroneck Tree Committee and Committee for the Environment quickly moved to cordon off the milkweed plants and protect them from invasives. In Fall 2022 volunteers planted native seeds and hundreds of native plants.

[Read the amazing story](#) about how a dedicated army of community volunteers restored this neglected riparian site.



Lewisboro, NY Garden Club Celebrates Creation of Accessible Playgroup with New Pollinator Garden

The Lewisboro Garden club, organizers of the Lewisboro Pollinator Pathway, specializes in creating beautiful traffic triangle gardens out of otherwise neglected spaces. In 2022 they maintained 27 triangles and stand-alone areas throughout the town of Lewisboro, NY. Recently, to celebrate the opening of a new playground that will be accessible to children with varied needs, the garden club planted another pollinator-friendly triangle garden at the



entrance to Lewisboro Town Park, installing tough, deer-resistant pollinator plants like tickseed (*pictured at right with green sweat bee.*) [Read more about how they created their beautiful new garden.](#)



Virgo feeds the goats at the Keney Park Sustainability Project, Hartford.

The Healing Powers of the Great Outdoors in Hartford, CT

CT Mirror Article

The Urban Ecology Wellness Center, housed in the 693-acre Keney Park in Hartford's CT's North End, was formed to connect North End community members to the healing power of nature through a variety of programs including forest and horticultural therapy, workshops in urban forestry and farming, and group hikes.

Herb Virgo, Founder and Executive Director of the Keney Park Sustainability Project, put Keney Park on the Pollinator Pathway in 2021, and as he told the *CT Mirror*, he feels a “heightened sense of wellbeing, a connectedness” when he spends time on the trails, and he wants others to feel the same way. [Read more](#) about Herb and his efforts to connect people with nature.

Photo courtesy of the CT Mirror

Organic Land Care

Now Mow May: Lessons Learned

From the Xerces Society

No Mow May really took flight this (past) year! We have seen hundreds of news articles, many new towns creating their own No Mow April/May/Spring resolutions, and we have received so many thoughtful questions on this surprisingly complex issue.

Not mowing for one month is not a magic fix, but studies have shown that reducing or eliminating mowing in the spring can increase bee abundance and species diversity when compared to more frequently mowed lawns.



No one is in charge of No Mow May, No Mow April, or any of the other variations. There are no set rules. What you choose to do is up to you, and what your local ordinances allow. Do what you can now, make incremental changes over time, and learn as you go.

Watch the native bees in your yard. When do they emerge? What native plants do they like? Add some height variation with spring-blooming native shrubs and trees, and see what visitors you attract to your yard. More information from Xerces Society here: [“No Mow May and Low Mow Spring.”](#)
[Watch this Xerces webinar](#) about how to make No Mow May work for your own garden situation.

Print out a Pollinator Pathway No Mow May yard sign [here](#).

The Right Way to Leave Stems for Native Bees

From the Tufts Pollinator Initiative

About 30% of New England's native bees build nests above ground. Besides bee hotels (many of which have [their own issues](#)), a great way to support these above-ground nesting bees is to leave dead plant stems standing in gardens. Bees will lay and provision offspring in these hollow or pithy stems. The Tufts Pollinator Initiative (TPI) members are often asked by gardeners, "when is the best time to cut down stems?" The answer is at least every two years (ideally never), which is longer than you might think.

[Read more](#) about supporting the entire life cycles of native bees from the Tufts Pollinator Initiative blog.



Swamp milkweed stems left standing provided nesting material for a female Baltimore Oriole, who returned repeatedly over the course of several days to strip the stems. Orioles build [incredible hanging nests](#) with long, strong plant fibers.



Right: Small Carpenter bees nesting in fennel stem stubble. (photos: Karalyn Lamb)

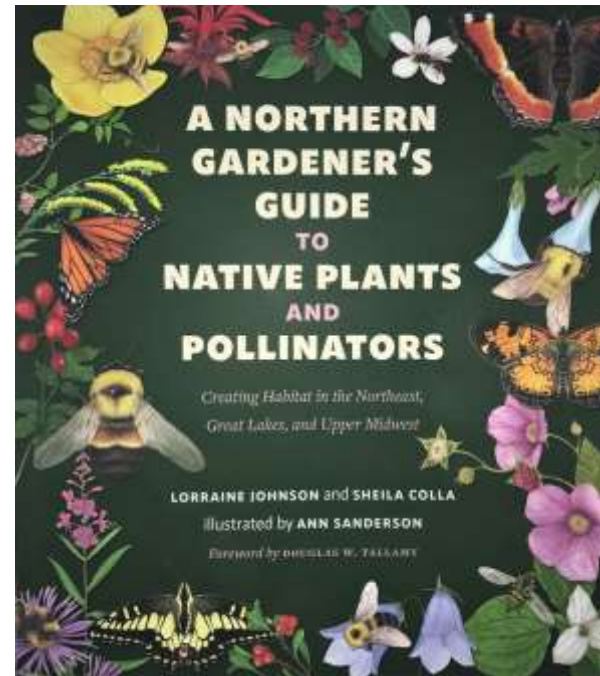
Recommended New Book

A Northern Gardener's Guide to Native Plants and Pollinators

by Lorraine Johnson and Sheila Colla

This beautifully illustrated book is sure to delight both beginner and experienced gardeners. It is packed with top tips and inspirational success stories as well as detailed plant profiles. Highly recommended! - The Pollinator Pathway

“What a valuable, comprehensive, timely and beautiful resource...Just a fantastic contribution.” - *Douglas Tallamy*



“This book has it all - sample garden plans; beautiful illustrations and photographs; a comprehensive section profiling native plants and the specific pollinators the plants support; answers to common pollinator gardening questions; and discussions about the critical link between native plants and pollinators... gardeners will treasure this extremely informative book.” - *Heather Holm*

April is Citizen Science Month!

April has been designated Citizen Science Month by SciStarter, a “globally acclaimed, online citizen science hub” where thousands of projects, have been registered by individual project leaders or imported through partnerships with federal governments, NGOs, and universities. SciStarter is a research affiliate of North Carolina State University and (NCSU) and Arizona State University (ASU).



What is Citizen Science?

By Kristin Quell-Garguilo, Founder of the Pollinator Pathway iNaturalist Project

Community science, also known as citizen science, refers to the collaboration between scientists and members of the public to gather and analyze data. This approach has become increasingly popular in recent years, as more and more people are recognizing the importance of involving communities in scientific research.

One area where community science has been particularly successful is in the study of pollinators. The importance of community science in pollinator research cannot be overstated. Traditional scientific research can only cover a limited area, but with community science, data can be gathered from a wide variety of locations. This allows scientists to gain a more comprehensive understanding of pollinator populations and how they are affected by environmental factors.

An easy, fun way to contribute to Citizen Science is to join the Pollinator Pathway iNaturalist Project!

Please Share this Flyer:



June Bio Blitz



Help us count
pollinators in your
community!

Calling all community scientists! Pollinator Pathway needs your help logging pollinator species throughout the month of June. Download the iNaturalist app and join the Pollinator Pathway project. Then snap pictures of pollinators and load them on iNaturalist. Your help contributes to our ever-expanding knowledge of pollinator species



New Firefly Atlas Will Put These Beloved Beetles on the Map!

The United States and Canada have more species of fireflies than most people realize - 173 at last count. Yet for more than half these species, we're missing enough data to even evaluate their population status. With Xerces' new [Firefly Atlas](#), anyone can join and help collect observations that will allow Xerces and our conservation partners to better protect the magic of fireflies, for generations to come.

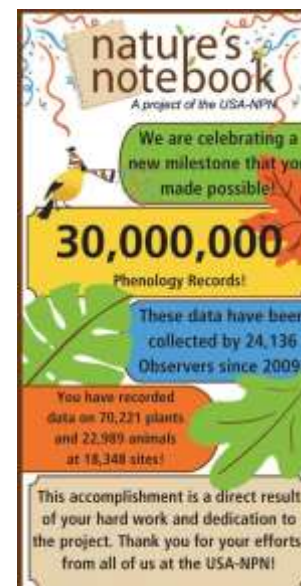
Whether you already keep records of firefly observations, work as a conservation professional, or are simply curious to learn more about the fireflies in your area, please consider joining our efforts! [Find out more.](#)

Photo: Wikimedia commons

Nature's Notebook

Nature's Notebook gathers information on plant and animal phenology across the U.S. to be used for decision-making on local, national and global scales to ensure the continued vitality of our environment.

Scientists alone cannot collect enough data: They need your help! Join more than 15,000 other naturalists across the nation in taking the pulse of our planet. You'll use scientifically-vetted observation guidelines, developed for over 1000 species, to ensure data are useful to researchers and decision-makers. [Learn more.](#)



The Great Sunflower Project

The Great Sunflower Project is the largest citizen science project focused on pollinators, with over 100,000 participants and counting. Volunteers are asked to find any plant (like a sunflower), observe it for five or more minutes, record all pollinators (like bees or butterflies) that visit, and report the data online. This project helps identify where pollinators are declining and determine how we can help improve their habitats. [More information.](#)

Resources We Like

Heather Holm's Pollinator Photo Website

Heather Holm is a pollinator conservationist and environmental educator who is “passionate about documenting the natural history and diversity of native pollinators and flower-visiting insects.”

She has made her beautiful pollinator photos available, free, for educational use at www.pollinatorphotos.com

More information about Heather’s work is available on her website: www.PollinatorsNativePlants.com

Photo of Long-horn bee courtesy of Heather Holm



Pesticides

Reasons to Avoid Weed and Feed Products

By Mary Wilson

If your usual lawn care routine contains weed-and-feed products, you should be aware of a number of reasons to eliminate them from your yard.

As with most lawn care chemicals, weed-and-feed products are used to make something look better without any real benefit to your yard's value as part of an ecosystem or its sustainability. In fact, Weed-and-Feed products detract in several ways; ranging from human health risks to polluting ground and surface water resources. And of course they do not really solve any problem as they must be reapplied again the following year. The answer lies in [organic lawn care methods](#) that focus on healthy soil and growing conditions.



To learn more about the dangers of these products, read the [Beyond Pesticides Factsheet: Five Reasons Not to Use Weed and Feed](#)



States Step Up to Ban Pollinator-Killing Neonicotinoid Pesticides

Maine and New Jersey are leading the way on this issue with strong restrictions to protect pollinators. Connecticut and New York have important bills pending now. [Here](#) is a list of states that have taken some action.

Learn more about these pesticides--commonly used on lawns to kill grubs and other insects and linked to dramatic declines in bees, butterflies, moths and birds--on this [half-hour podcast](#) with Pollinator Pathway board member Louise Washer and Kevin Gallagher of WPKN's *Digging in the Dirt*.

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and anyone interested!

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