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## Helping Pollinators: A New Pollinator Toolkit and Demonstration Garden

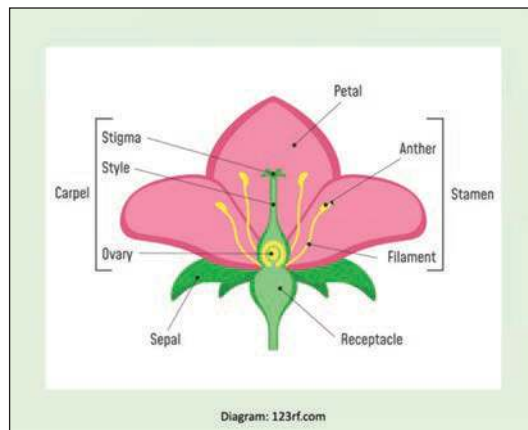


*A sample of plants in a pollinator garden*

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**W**e owe the beauty and diversity of our environment to the services provided by pollinators. They are critical to our life: three quarters of the world's flowering plants and over a third of the world's food crops depend on pollinators to reproduce.



For a reward of nectar or pollen from flowers, pollinators (mostly insects) provide those plants with something they lack: mobility. In most cases, pollinators transfer pollen from the male anthers of one flower to the female stigma of another flower of the same species, thus facilitating the production of seed and creating genetic diversity.

Who are the major pollinators in Massachusetts?

- Bees and wasps
- Butterflies and moths
- Hummingbirds
- Flies and mosquitos
- Beetles, ants, and slugs

(Many types of bats are pollinators, but those in Massachusetts do not provide that service.)



**Native bumblebees** are our primary pollinators, and they are at risk in our region. Three of the ten species are at risk of disappearing from the state over the next ten years



Monarch butterfly on swamp milkweed plant

if we don't do something to stop the trend. Forty of the 100 species of butterflies native to Massachusetts also have been listed by the state as being of "conservation concern."

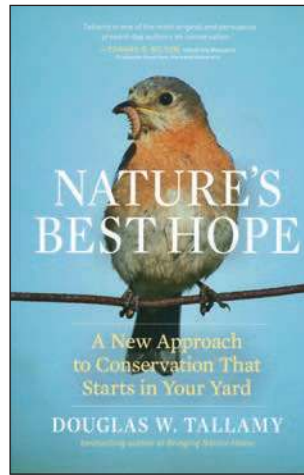
There are many reasons for the decline of pollinators: loss of their habitat, the use of pesticides and herbicides, the declining number of the native plants that provide their food, and competition for nectar from honeybees, which are not native to the United States.



Bumblebee on Asclepias tuberosa plant

In addition, there is concern that as climate change causes plants to bloom earlier (or later), the nectar and pollen on which they depend may not be available when pollinators need it.

Noted entomologist Douglas Tallamy, the author



of *Nature's Best Hope*, has suggested that we all work together to fight pollinator decline. He asks "individual homeowners, property owners, land managers, farmers, and anyone with some soil to plant in...to start a new habitat by planting native plants and removing most invasive plants." He explains, "In the past, we have asked one thing of our gardens: that they be pretty. Now they have to support life, sequester carbon, feed

pollinators, and manage water."

In that spirit, City Councilor Alicia Bowman convened a citywide Pollinator Working Group, and the two of us took on the assignment of creating a Pollinator Toolkit to help people who would like to grow native plants that will attract pollinators.

Although Newton's yards contain many beautiful trees, shrubs, and plants, only a small percentage of them are the native plants that evolved as food sources for native pollinators, and we hope to help change that situation.

Once we assembled the pieces of the Pollinator Toolkit, Newton North senior Veer Gadodia (with some help from his younger sister, Diya) volunteered his time to implement it on the Newton Conservators' website. We are very grateful for Veer's help.

You can check out the toolkit here: <https://newtonconservators.org/pollinator-toolkit>.

Chart from Pollinator Toolkit

Latin Name	Common Name	Height	Bloom / Fruit	Bees	Butterflies	Humming birds	Moths/Other Insects	Soil Type
<i>Viola pedata</i> or <i>sororia</i>	Bird's foot or common violet	4-8"	Spring	✓			✓	Dry
<i>Fragaria virginiana</i>	Wild strawberry	2-5"	Spring	✓	✓		✓	Dry/Avg
<i>Polygonatum pubescens</i>	Downy solomon's seal	8-16"	Spring	✓			✓	Avg
<i>Zizia aurea</i>	Heartleaf alexander	1-2'	Late spring	✓	✓		✓	Avg
<i>Pentstemon hiraultii</i>	Hairy beardtongue	12-18"	Late spring	✓	✓	✓	✓	All
<i>Baptisia tinctoria</i>	Yellow wild indigo	3-4'	Early summer	✓	✓			Dry/Avg
<i>Spiraea tomentosa</i>	Rosy meadowsweet	2-5'	Summer	✓	✓		✓	Avg/Wet
<i>Verbena hastata</i>	Blue vervain	2-4'	Summer	✓			✓	Avg/Wet
<i>Solidago flexicaulis</i>	Zigzag goldenrod	2-3'	Summer-Fall	✓	✓	✓		Dry/Avg
<i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i>	Cutleaf coneflower	3-4'	Summer-Fall	✓	✓			Avg/Wet
<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>	Anise hyssop	3-5'	Summer-Fall	✓	✓			Dry/Avg
<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	Cardinal flower	2-3'	Mid-summer- Early fall	✓	✓	✓	✓	Wet
<i>Morinda fruticosa</i>	Wild bergamot	24-42"	Late summer	✓	✓	✓		Avg
<i>Chelone glabra</i>	White turtlehead	18-30"	Late summer-Fall	✓		✓		Wet
<i>Symphoricarpos cordifolius</i>	Blue wood aster	2-3'	Late summer-Fall	✓	✓	✓	✓	Dry/Avg



As you can see in the sample chart on p. 2, the Pollinator Toolkit contains charts of pollinator plants for mostly sunny, part sun/part shade, and mostly shady gardens. There are lists of perennials, shrubs, trees, and vines. When you click on the name of a plant, a photo appears.



*New demonstration pollinator garden at Newton City Hall*

for starting your garden, and information for helping your garden support pollinators all year long. There are also useful books and websites.

While working on the Pollinator Toolkit, we realized that it would be helpful for people to see a working example. Wonderfully, the Mayor's office and the Parks, Recreation & Culture department granted permission for us to create a demonstration pollinator garden at City Hall—just on your left as you turn into City Hall from Homer Street. A generous grant from Newton Conservators enabled us to buy plants for the garden. Thank you to all who made this garden possible.

In addition, the Toolkit lists sources for buying native plants in our area, tips

We were able to plant the garden at the end of May — with help from Katherine Howard and Donna Sirutis. You can see ongoing updates on Newton Conservators' Facebook page and on the new Facebook page for the Newton Community Pollinator Project. If you have questions, please send them to us at [pollinators@newtonconservators.org](mailto:pollinators@newtonconservators.org).

Please stop by to see what's going on in the demonstration garden. And have fun using the Toolkit as you work on your own pollinator gardens! Our gardens and container plantings can be both beautiful and life sustaining to the pollinators on which our environment depends. ♦

✿ Beth Wilkinson and Mark Feldhusen



## RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR JOIN TODAY!

**YES, count me in! I want to be a nature steward and help Newton Conservators protect and preserve the natural areas in our community.**

**Please renew/accept my tax-deductible membership at the level checked below:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Directors' Circle | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Family Membership          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Patron            | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Individual Membership      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Donor             | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student Membership         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Sustaining Member  | <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contribution \$_____ |

**Want to make an even bigger impact? Help us support these special funds:**

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| Woodcock Meadow \$_____   | Trails Fund \$_____ |
| Ordway Endowment Fund \$_____                                   |                     |
| Land Stewardship Areas<br>(Dexter Rd., Bracebridge Rd.) \$_____ | Other<br>\$_____    |

Memberships run for the calendar year. All new members receive *Walking Trails in Newton's Parks and Conservation Lands*.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer!  
*Please email me.*

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