

## Planting a Pollinator Space?

Pollinators and pollination systems are vitally important to the health and vibrancy of our natural world. Pollinators are keystone species, and a well-functioning plant and animal pollination system provides food for plant and animal life, carbon sequestration and biodiversity. Functional pollination systems rely on native plants, which provide nectar and pollen to pollinator species, as well as shelter and habitat to other animals.

The Lincoln Land Conservation Trust, as a benefit to its members, will be providing the opportunity to purchase plant kits of highly curated, native plants at wholesale prices this spring and summer. These kits will not only source hard to find native plants, including shrubs, grasses and perennials, they will contain a mix to ensure plants that bloom from spring through the fall.

Before you start planting, there are some steps to take now to make sure your property will be an ideal habitat for these native plants and the pollinators themselves. Whether you handle your yard maintenance yourself or hire a landscaping service, please take note of these preparation steps:

- **Stop all pesticide use!** This includes herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides. These can harm the plants that we are trying to advance in these habitats, as well as the pollinators themselves. This resource has alternatives to insecticides: (<https://www.xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/natural-lands>)
- **Reduce your mowing frequency!** In addition to reducing emissions, mowing your lawn less often can increase bee abundance and diversity. It was found that bee abundance is optimized when lawns are mown on a two week schedule, not weekly. (<https://www.xerces.org/blog/bee-friendlier-with-your-lawncare>)
- **Dedicate less area to lawn** and more to native flowering plants.
- Allow lawn “weeds” like dandelion to grow – they may be considered undesirable but are an important food source for bees.
- **Use lawn alternatives** like native groundcovers, sedges, fescues and low wildflowers.
- Use mulches wisely – while mulch can be an effective way to control weeds and retain moisture, heavy mulching can block access to the ground for soil nesting bees and certain materials (such as cedar mulch) can be toxic to bees and ants. (protecting pollinators at home, xerces.org)
- Provide a variety of native flowering trees, shrubs, and wildflowers that bloom successively throughout the seasons. **Avoid cultivars!** Many produce beautiful flowers but poor-quality pollen or nectar.
- Continue to manage and remove invasive species.

\*\*\*Importantly, if you have a landscape company that manages your property, discuss your objectives with them to make sure that they will not apply anything without your knowledge and consent.\*\*\*

Establishing a yard with flowering native plants will be a bit more work in the first year or two, when you are planting and weeding, but once established, native plants are adapted to our area and will thrive with less maintenance, including less water, needed from us.