

Conserve Water by Going Native and Other Water Saving Strategies for Your Yard

We Americans are draining our rivers to water our lawns. In lower Fairfield County, 40% of water is used outdoors, and in the summer that number jumps to 70%. Country-wide, up to 60% of domestic drinking water is used to water yards and gardens, much of which is wasted through over-watering or misdirecting water onto impermeable surfaces.

When you plant a pollinator garden, you're helping counter these trends. How? Native plants have adapted to local climate conditions and require little to no additional water. Because their root systems are deeper than those of turf grass and many non-native plants, they are far more effective at absorbing water and filtering storm water runoff. A typical lawn absorbs only 10 percent of the amount of storm water that a natural landscape does.

Replacing turf grass with native plants, shrubs and grasses means less watering and provides a better natural filtration system, which means lower levels of polluted storm water entering our rivers, streams and lakes. Yet another good reason to consider going native!



And while you're at it, try adopting these other outdoor water conservation strategies too:

- Check and repair leaky faucets, hoses and irrigation systems.
- Second guess yourself before turning on the faucet. Only water if your plants really need it.
- Do your watering when it's coolest. Early morning is best. And don't water when it's windy.
- Make sure you're not watering driveways, streets or walkways by mistake.
- Have your soil tested. Good organic soil absorbs and retains water better: 100 pounds of humus holds nearly twice the amount of water as degraded soils.
- Mulch to reduce evaporation and cut down on the growth of weeds.
- Raise the cutting height of your lawn mower — longer grass blades provide shade for each other and reduce evaporation
- Don't install or use ornamental water features unless they recycle the water.
- If you have an irrigation system, consider adding a smart meter which only waters when conditions are dry.

For more water conservation tips, visit norwalkriver.org.

Volunteers Drive Rapid Growth of Pollinator Pathway

continued from cover

What may also escape your notice as you peruse the map is the fact that each of the little butterflies represents hours of effort by over 425 volunteers who planned, pulled invasives, purchased or otherwise sourced native plants, and planted them in new homes along the Pathway. The Pathway owes its very existence to them. And in the buzzing of the bees we think we hear the sound of applause.

In this issue, we let Pollinator Pathway volunteers speak for themselves about the importance they place on their work

and what motivates them to do it. While we don't have space to acknowledge everyone individually, every contribution is worth its weight in pollen.

If their stories inspire you, join the movement! In addition to making your yard pollinator friendly, you can sign up for a volunteer day and learn to identify invasive plants, remove them, and plant native ones. Or attend one of the many talks we offer. Check upcoming Pollinator Pathway events at Pollinator-Pathway.org.



Pollinator Pathway Was Featured in the September Issue of Connecticut Magazine!

The Pathway Gets a Native Plant Transfusion

The Pollinator Pathway got a big boost this summer when UCONN PhD candidate John Campanelli donated 5,000 pollinator-friendly native plants to the Pollinator Pathway and our partner CT NOFA (Northeast Organic Farm Association). John had propagated

them as part of his research in conservation biology. We helped distribute and plant all 5,000 seedlings plus about 75 small native willows (both silky and pussy willows) to towns throughout Connecticut. Many of the plants ended



John Campanelli with academic advisor Julia Kuzovkina

up along the Norwalk River in Wilton, Ridgefield, and Norwalk. Twenty-eight willows were planted along the river at Oyster Shell Park in Norwalk, for example, and another 15 are along the river at the Nod Hill Brewery in Ridgefield and at Chess Park in Wilton.

Eagle scout projects, community gardens, organic farms, schools, city parks, riverbanks, and meadows all received plants including penstemon, columbine, and golden alexander for spring blooming; bee balm, mountain mint, and lobelia for mid-summer; and aster and goldenrod for fall.

John's donation helped raise awareness about the importance of native plants, and it helped us grow the Pathway. Thank you UCONN and John Campanelli!



Norwalk River Watershed Association
Fall 2019 Newsletter

The Pollinator Pathway Issue: Volunteers Drive Rapid Growth of Pollinator Pathway

What do Philip Johnson's Glass House in New Canaan, Oyster Shell Park in Norwalk, and a traffic triangle in Lewisboro have in common?

They are all welcome stops for bees, beetles, butterflies and other pollinators on the Pollinator Pathway, the quickly growing corridor of native plants that now extends through all seven watershed towns and beyond. Well beyond in fact! As of this writing, the Pathway, which originated in Wilton in 2017, has spread to over 75 Connecticut and New York State towns, all the way from Glastonbury to Nyack. You might say it's spreading like wildflowers!

Inside this issue you'll discover a map of the watershed and its seven towns with butterfly icons



Volunteers at Wilton's Chess Park, where some of the 5000 plants donated by John Campanelli of UCONN were planted this summer.

marking the public way-stations and protected open spaces along the Pathway where native plants thrive. What you won't see repre-

"The interest my academic adviser Julia Kuzovkina and I have in pollinator health was influenced by our work helping New England State Departments of Transportation transition to more sustainable roadside re-vegetation practices. We came to realize that using native plant communities rather than turf grass to re-vegetate roadsides helped provide corridors for pollinators to migrate and countered landscape fragmentation, which has contributed to the decline in pollinator populations. We appreciate that the work Pollinator Pathway does helps to counter this issue by increasing pollinator habitats and food sources along an important migratory route."

— John Campanelli (Read more about John on back cover.)

New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Wilton, Lewisboro NY

sented is the myriad of individual private properties whose owners have joined the Pollinator Pathway movement. But you can visit Pollinator-Pathway.org to view a new digital map that shows them. And if you haven't joined the movement yet, you can find out just how easy it is there... and then add your property to the map too!

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A Big Thank You to Our Pollinator Pathway Volunteers!

The Pollinator Pathway is being built—plant by plant, shrub by shrub, patch by patch—by a dedicated group of volunteers in the seven Norwalk River watershed towns and beyond. We already know the pollinators thank them. And with this issue of our newsletter we’d like to thank each and every one of them too.

Here’s what some of them have to say about the work they’re doing and what inspires them. And perhaps it will inspire you too!



“What I love about the Pollinator Pathway is that you can see the impact of your work almost immediately, which is often not the case with environmental projects. Plant in the spring and suddenly in July hummingbirds are at your monarda, gold finches are on the coneflowers and in the fall, bumble bees snoozing on the sedum.”

– Robin Bates-Mason,
President, Planet New Canaan

“The Glass House 49-acre site is an important landscape for wildlife to live and roam freely in a pesticide-free environment. We are proud to be a part of the Pollinator Pathway community. With this community effort we can work together towards a healthier environment for people, pets and the planet starting with our own backyard.”

– Christa Carr
Communications Director, the Glass House,
New Canaan



“Nowadays all we hear about are the very negative effects we’re having on the natural world. The reason I’m a big believer in the Pollinator Pathway is that it’s making a positive impact on a small piece of the natural world. We’re giving Mother Nature a chance to thrive. We want Grace Farms to be a restorative and hopeful place where nature and people can thrive together.”

– Mark Fowler,
Director, Nature Initiative,
Grace Farms Foundation, New Canaan



“I am thrilled to be part of this project. It feels grounded in what matters for our planet, promotes sharing, and is part of the legacy I hope to leave my children and grandchildren. Our working model of grassroots effort, collaboration, education and volunteerism is helping provide a better world for pollinators and other organisms—including people.”

– Jackie Algon (right), Wilton – Pollinator Pathway Steering Committee Member
(with Louise Washer, Norwalk)



“What I enjoy most working on the Pollinator Pathway is planting native plants and seeing the quick response time of the pollinators (butterflies and bees). They often show up just a few minutes later.”

– Liz Craig (left), Wilton – Pollinator Pathway Steering Committee Member
(with Laurie Mirra of Norwalk)

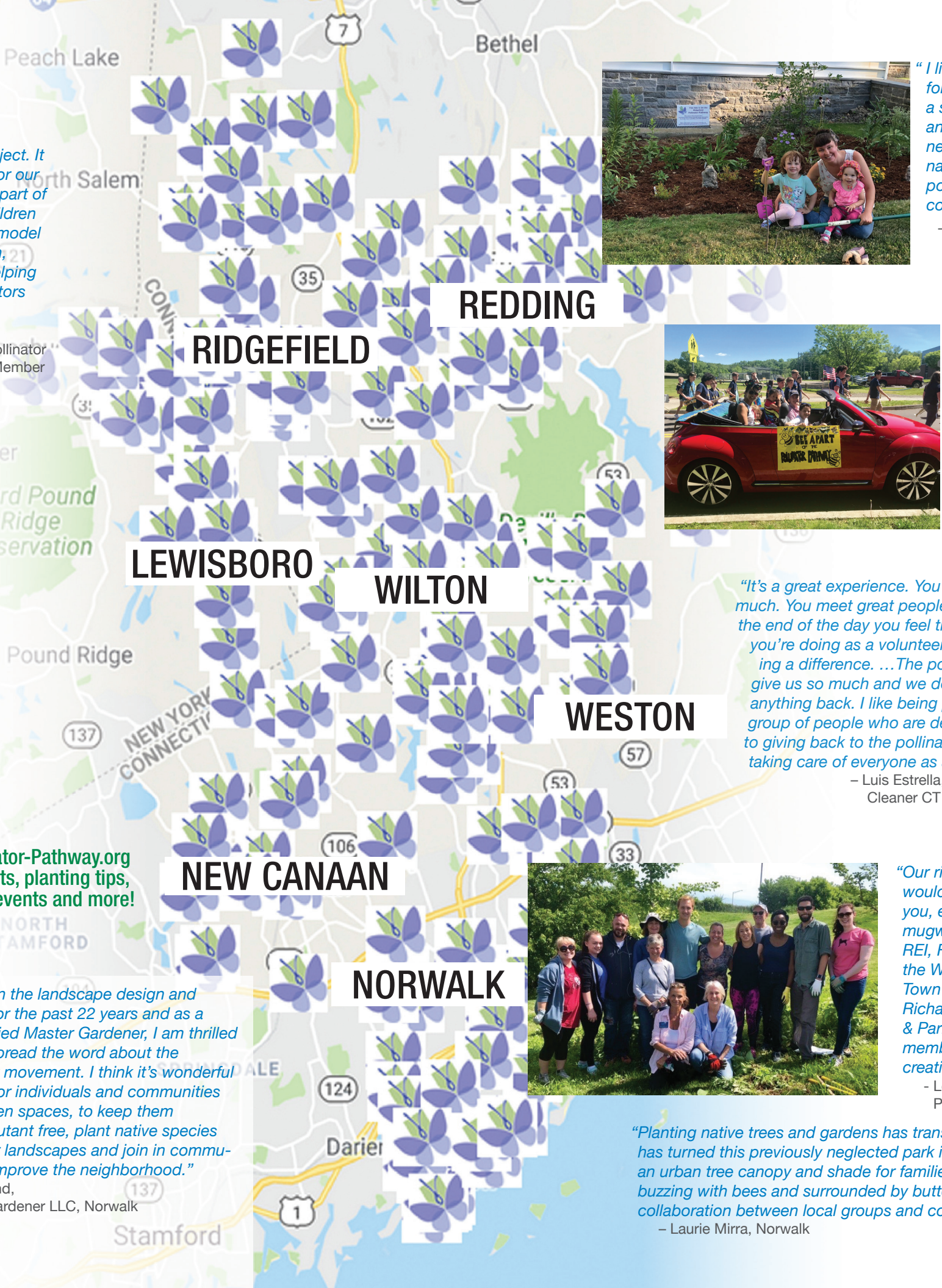


Visit Pollinator-Pathway.org
for plant lists, planting tips,
upcoming events and more!



“As a professional in the landscape design and horticultural field for the past 22 years and as a Connecticut Certified Master Gardener, I am thrilled to be working to spread the word about the Pollinator Pathway movement. I think it’s wonderful and very positive for individuals and communities to protect their open spaces, to keep them chemical and pollutant free, plant native species when redoing their landscapes and join in community projects that improve the neighborhood.”

– Nancy McClelland,
The Perennial Gardener LLC, Norwalk



“I like the idea of a safe haven garden just for the bees, butterflies, and birds, a special place just for them to be fed and sheltered. Pollinators are absolutely necessary to maintain the diversity of our natural ecosystems. We need healthy pollinator populations to ensure a healthy community for all life.”

– Kristin Quell-Garguilo, Ridgefield – NRWA Board Member



“When I became aware of the damage my conventional lawn was doing, I felt compelled to reverse the damage I was causing, and encourage my friends and neighbors to rethink their lawns. The Pollinator Pathway has successfully allowed us to engage with our neighbors and create awareness in a meaningful way.”

– Sarah Hutchison, Weston

“It’s a great experience. You learn so much. You meet great people, and at the end of the day you feel that what you’re doing as a volunteer is making a difference. ...The pollinators give us so much and we don’t give anything back. I like being part of a group of people who are dedicated to giving back to the pollinators and taking care of everyone as a whole.”

– Luis Estrella, Norwalk
Cleaner CT Coalition



“The Lewisboro Land Trust got involved because we thought this was a great way to increase community awareness of nature and the central role it plays in all of our lives. We were pretty amazed at the huge response and enthusiasm in our town.”

– Bobbe Stultz,
Co-Chair, Lewisboro Land Trust



“Planting for pollinators adds another dimension to the enjoyment of a garden. I spend lots of time watching them buzz and munch!”

– Mary Ann Eggleston,
Lewisboro



“The idea of a Pollinator Pathway has captured people’s imaginations and been incredibly effective in uniting local groups and individuals to focus on the importance of creating new and protecting existing landscapes that support pollinators and all wildlife.”

– John McLeran, Redding

“In Redding, we have been on the mission of minimizing invasives and maximizing natives for years, as well as promoting a healthy environment for all living things throughout the year!”

– Susan Green, President, Redding Garden Club

“Our riverbank and meadow habitat restoration projects wouldn’t be possible without our volunteers. Thank you, everyone, for coming out and making pulling up mugwort and cutting knotweed fun. Special thanks to REI, FactSet, Eversource, ASML, and also to UCONN, the Wilton, Norwalk and Westport Garden Clubs, Town of Ridgefield, Ridgefield Rotary Club, Anne S. Richardson Fund, the Norwalk Dept. of Recreation & Parks, Norwalk Land Trust and, of course, to our members. And finally, many thanks to Gene Smith for creating our beautiful Pollinator Pathway materials.”

– Louise Washer, Norwalk – President NRWA & Pollinator Pathway Steering Committee Member



“Planting native trees and gardens has transformed Woodward Park in South Norwalk. It has turned this previously neglected park into a beautiful tree-lined space that provides an urban tree canopy and shade for families gathering in the park. The native plants are buzzing with bees and surrounded by butterflies. This was all made possible by a special collaboration between local groups and companies, and the City of Norwalk. “

– Laurie Mirra, Norwalk

The Pollinator Pathway Map in the background of this spread shows the extent to which the Pollinator Pathway has grown in our seven watershed towns, beginning to connect previously fragmented land, adding rich sources of pollen and nectar, and offering pesticide-free host plants for the pollinators and their offspring. The butterfly icons indicate both properties developed by Pollinator Pathway volunteers and public lands managed by our many local partner organizations.

To view this map in more detail and to follow the ongoing expansion of the Pathway, visit pollinator-pathway.org or NorwalkRiver.org.