

in the mainstream

Norwalk River Watershed Association
Spring 2021 Newsletter

Help Us Plant Trees for Bees (and Water Quality)

If you're staring at your yard and considering adding some pollinator-friendly native plants, you may be missing the gorilla in the room, or in this case, the gorilla in the garden. You have only to cast your eyes upward to find some of our pollinators' best friends. Trees.

These are just a few of the services trees supply for bees and other pollinators:

- Pollen and nectar when the flowers, including catkins, bloom
- Bark and wood for shelter
- Hosts for moths and butterflies

A tree in bloom produces lots of nectar. In fact, you might consider trees "meadows in the sky," to steal a metaphor from the Iowa group Trees Forever (treesforever.org). Trees and native woodland plants provide food for early pollinators in the spring, and the sequence of blooms of different kinds of native trees can sustain pollinators over a long period of time. And given the density of flowers on a single tree, or stand of



A Norwalk Eagle Scout project to plant native plants at Oyster Shell Park

trees, pollinators don't need to expend much energy to flit from flower to flower.

The problem is we are losing trees at an alarming rate, especially native trees. Research conducted by the University of Connecticut's Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) shows that forests declined by 6 percent in New

York and Connecticut from 1985 to 2006. In coastal areas, they declined by 9.25 percent, and about two-thirds of all forested land is fragmented. In Connecticut alone, forest cover was reduced by 184.3 square miles – more than the size of Greenwich, Stamford, Darien, New Canaan, Norwalk, and Wilton combined.

(continued)



This native buttonbush is slated to be cut down soon as part of a plan to build a wall along the Grupes Reservoir on the Silvermine River in New Canaan.

This is bad news not just for pollinators but for wildlife and people. Notably, trees are key to maintaining and improving water quality. Among other things, their root systems provide a buffer along rivers and streams that helps filter sediment and chemicals, stabilizes riverbanks, prevents erosion and reduces stormwater runoff.

That's where the NRWA's *Trees for Bees* program comes in. A local initiative driven by 16 conservation organizations with the generous support of One Tree Planted and K&J Tree Service, Trees for Bees will plant over 3,000 trees and shrubs this spring and fall to help connect the Pollinator Pathway and protect water quality in the Norwalk River and Long Island Sound.

So far 8 towns have signed on, each of which has an active Pollinator Pathway. The new trees will help create corridors of safe habitat for bees, birds, butterflies and other pollinating insects to link the Pathway sites and towns.

In Lewisboro, it all started when Mary Ann Lansdale was cleaning

up and discovered an old brochure from the Colonel William F. Fox Memorial Saratoga Tree Nursery in Saratoga, NY—the oldest state forest tree nursery in the country. “We have lost so many ash trees – it’s devastating”, says Mary Ann. “I thought let’s do this – let’s plant native trees!”

Inspired by that brochure and Doug Tallamy’s idea of a Home-grown National Park, Mary Ann approached the Lewisboro Garden Club and they quickly formed a Tree Committee. The committee, with Mary Ann as chair, placed ads in their local paper and library newsletter offering seedlings to Lewisboro residents. The response has been overwhelming. This spring 1,200 tree seedlings, including 14 species, will find homes on 166 properties in every corner of Lewisboro. And the garden club has also donated a mature White Oak to Onatru Farm.

On the other side of the watershed, John McLeran, Open Spaces Manager for the Town of Redding and Redding Land Trust, is organizing a volunteer event to plant 120 native trees and shrubs to restore a half-acre of land trust property. The trees there were chopped down by overzealous neighbors.

Trees for Bees and its sponsors, One Tree Planted and K&J Tree Service, are making the Redding and Lewisboro restorations possible, as well as projects in Norwalk,

Wilton, New Canaan, Ridgefield, Darien and Westport.

“We’re unbelievably excited about being a part of Trees for Bees”, says Eric Brushett of K&J, which has offices in Hamden and Norwalk. “We believe strongly in the Pollinator Pathway. We want to help put things back in the ground, especially native species that have been affected by development and climate change.”

In addition to helping fund the purchase of trees, shrubs, mulch and deer fencing, K&J employees will join volunteer crews at 17 planting events this spring and fall. With additional funding support from One Tree Planted, Trees for Bees could be the beginning of a beautiful relationship!

If you want to turn your own yard into a bee haven, pick up a native tree or shrub in addition to perennial plants the next time you’re at a nursery or at a local plant sale.

To join a tree planting event or for more information about *Trees for Bees*, visit norwalkriver.org.

Trees for Bees Volunteer Planting Saturday, May 15, 10AM-1PM

Oyster Shell Park Norwalk

**Wear masks, bring shovel,
work gloves, reusable water bottle**

Rain date: May 16

Questions and to register info@norwalkriver.org

Sponsored by NRWA, KJ Tree and One Tree Planted

Partnering with NRWA to Plant *Trees for Bees*



Darien
Lewisboro
New Canaan
Norwalk
Ridgefield
Wilton



Native Plant Focus



Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*) are spring ephemerals – plants that complete their entire life cycle above-ground in a few short weeks and then seemingly vanish until the following spring. Their flowers are critical sources of food for the earliest pollinators.

Dutchman's Breeches are pollinated by bumblebee queens, which have survived the winter and emerge early, on the hunt for sources of pollen and nectar, which are in short supply early in the year. Bumblebee

queens, unlike many other insects, have long enough proboscises to collect the nectar hidden within the flower spurs. These bees and flowers have evolved together in a way that's mutually beneficial.

Like many other spring ephemerals, the seeds of Dutchman's Breeches are spread by ants, a process called myrmecochory.

To find Dutchman's Breeches, take a stroll through a nearby woodland before the leaves emerge on the trees and you will find their fringed leaf clusters emerging above the leaf litter. Rows of white, two-spurred flowers that were once thought to resemble a dutchman's pantaloons rise up on bare flower stalks above.

These tiny woodland wonders, along with trees for bees, are part of the network of plant life that supports our native pollinators.

DID YOU KNOW?



Rivers Alliance Honors NRWA with 2020 Environmental Champions Award

"NRWA's programs run the gamut of water quality monitoring and restoration projects. [In 2020] they have also taken on the weighty task of intervening in a dam safety permit in order to defend wetlands impacted by the project and an education campaign about diminished flows on Comstock Brook due to registered diversions. Did we mention that this is an all-volunteer organization?"

- **Rivers Alliance**
riversalliance.org

Green Business Award Available for Local Businesses

Local businesses in Ridgefield are now eligible to earn a Green Business Award to publicize and celebrate their eco-friendly practices. The award is based on a point system. Businesses that earn enough points can display a special decal to alert customers and prospects of their green practices. They will also receive support and publicity to recognize their achievement.



The Green Business Award was created by Ridgefield High School junior, Alexia Anglade. Alexia worked with the Ridgefield Action Committee for the Environment and the Norwalk River Watershed Association to earn her Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest leadership award given to Girl Scouts.

“Climate change is an issue that comes from every individual’s

impact on the Earth. Even Ridgefield, a small town, can still have a large impact on our oceans and ecosystems,” says Alexia. She was motivated to create the award as she wanted to make an impact on climate change and other environmental issues such as reducing waste while simultaneously supporting the small businesses that make Ridgefield so charming. She adds, “I really started to notice which businesses have eco-friendly practices such as eliminating styrofoam, allowing customers to bring their own reusable cup for coffee or actively recycling. I thought others may like to support businesses who have eco-friendly business practices.”

Alexia created a website, www.greenawardct.com, which has tips and information for anyone interested in reducing waste and addressing climate change. She hopes towns around CT and beyond will adopt similar awards.

“We were thrilled when Alexia came to us with this idea. Once her project is established in Ridgefield, we would like to introduce it in the



other six watershed towns,” says Louise Washer, president of the Norwalk River Watershed Association. “The window decals will be a great way to support and recognize the many local businesses that have adopted environmentally sustainable practices, and Alexia’s checklist for businesses will provide ideas for more action.”

Businesses that qualify will receive a free window decal (above) and will have their names listed on the Green Awards CT and the Norwalk River Watershed Association website as a sign of appreciation and support for their efforts.

For more information, please visit www.greenawardct.com

Membership Form

Becoming a member helps NRWA continue to protect local water quality, hiking trails, and wildlife habitats.

Riparian Society

Steward	\$1000+
Protector	\$500 – \$999
Patron	\$100 – \$499

Membership

Supporter	\$50 – \$99
Friend	\$30 – \$49
Other	\$_____

☐ My company has a matching gift program
(company name) _____

Donate Online at NorwalkRiver.org

Or mail your tax-deductible Annual Membership gift of \$_____ to
NRWA, Inc. PO Box 7114, Wilton, CT 06897. Please make check payable to NRWA, Inc.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I would like to receive updates and events info. My email is: _____

Thank you to our generous supporters!

The NRWA board extends our sincere thanks to you for your ongoing support throughout the past year. We hope that you have taken the opportunity to get out and enjoy our beautiful watershed through these challenging times and that you will continue to enjoy and support it for years to come.

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One Tree Planted
Ridgefield Thrift Shop

Upcoming Events



Thursday, May 13, 12-1:30 PM. May is Here! New England's Best Birding Month with nature writer & photographer Chris Bosak. Part of the *Nature Friendly Gardening Series*. Registration information at norwalkpl.org.

Saturday, May 15, 10AM-1 PM. Trees for Bees! Volunteer Tree Planting Event. Oyster Shell Park, Norwalk. Questions and to register: info@norwalkriver.org.

Wednesday, May 26th, 4-5:30 PM. Webinar: Understanding the Fascinating Life Cycle of Native Plants with Heather McCargo, Founder/Executive Director of the Maine Wild Seed Project. Register at ridgefieldlibrary.org.

Tuesday, June 8, 6-7 PM. Restoring Wild: A Panel Discussion. With the NRWA's Louise Washer, land manager Penn Marchael and Mark Fowler of Grace Farms Foundation. Register at ridgefieldlibrary.org.

Thursday, June 17, 12:00-1:30 PM. The Seed Keepers, with author Diane Wilson. Part of the *Nature Friendly Gardening Series*. Registration information to come.

And Ongoing...

Wednesdays & Saturdays 9:30-11:30AM. Restoring the Gardens & Riverbank at Oyster Shell Park. To register, email Nancy McClelland at theperennialgardener@gmail.com.

Volunteers Needed for Masked, Socially Distanced, Outdoor Project. The Ridgefield Pollinator Pathway is working on a 3-year meadow restoration project at town-owned McKeon Farm. Contact us at info@pollinator-pathway.org to join!

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Norwalk, CT

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