



February/March 2021

I was looking out at my property today. It's snowing again. It's cold and will be colder tonight. But that's New England in February. The cold means that there is still time for me to plant those milkweed seeds in milk bottles and get them outside to scarify. The seeds need to freeze and then slowly warm up to grow.



There are milkweed plants on our property in various spots. They have grown there for many years. These 'volunteers' are welcome to their chosen spots. I am hoping that the new seedlings will change our scattered plants into healthy patches of plants.

In the landscape, common milkweed is often too aggressive and weedy to be widely appropriate for beds and borders. It is much better suited to unmaintained edges of fields or thickets. If you already have common milkweed in the garden, you can prevent further spread by removing immature seed pods. Since milkweed is a perennial, it will emerge again in the same spot next summer, but its spread will be more limited.

. I have enough to do here that new plants are not high on my list. However, I've been looking at sources and doing my homework for the spring and summer. Taking better care of what I have is what is important. And I'm learning about host plants and nectar plants and biodiversity. Because we have a wood lot the most exciting information for me is: trees. Trees are host plants in the same way that milkweed is a host plant. Native oak trees are host plants for more than 500 types of pollinators and caterpillars. Native trees are like living bird feeders for your property as the birds are raising their chicks on caterpillars that are hatching in the trees.. Unfortunately, something like 80 percent of trees planted on properties today are non-native and host very few pollinators and caterpillars.. Look for native trees when you decide to plant a tree.

This article talks about where the pollinators hide in the Winter..

https://northernwoodlands.org/outside_story/article/insects-winter?utm_source=tos_weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=outside_story

The article about where pollinators hide reminded me that my gardens last Fall never looked messier. I left as many stalks and stems as I could and let the leaves and grass clipping be mulch. I know that when it warms up I'm going to want to tidy up everything. I also know that those wonderful warm days in late march and early April are too soon to remove all the woody stalks and long grasses from the gardens. Wait until there have been 5-8 days of above 50 degrees. Cleaning up all the gardens should be a carefully done job. Put all the stalks on the woodpile/brush heap. Wait until it is warm and then be careful how you handle the stalks and leaf litter. There might be some sleepy pollinators hiding out in them.



It is the end of February. There are only a few more weeks of winter. Plans for gardens, looking at plant and seed sources and daydreaming about Spring are part of every day.

The following notes are things to think about:

Violets and Dandelions are two of the first flowers to appear in the spring. They are too important to be pulled out as 'weeds'.



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Herbs can be wonderful in planters on a deck or patio. They have pretty blossoms and are a favorite with many pollinators



This is a good example of 'aggressive' common milkweed. In this case the Spiderwort and Milkweed coexist easily

Milkweed is necessary for the success of Monarch Butterflies. But for their long journey to Mexico in late summer Monarchs need nectar for food to sustain them. One of their favorite sources is the Mexican Sunflower.

RESOURCES

Is It Native?

The easiest resource for finding native plants is **Native Plant Finder**. Just Google the name or go to the link. It uses your zip code.

<https://www.nwf.org/nativePlantFinder/plants>



Self sowing annuals

This is very informative about annuals that replant themselves.
Some come back for many years

https://extension.unh.edu/blog/which-annual-flowers-are-self-sowing?utm_source=AdaptiveMailer&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Granite%20State%20Gardening&org=785&lvl=100&ite=15104&lea=2149404&ctr=0&par=1&trk=a0W6f00000VWkykEAD

Pollinator Plants for Northern New England Gardens

https://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource005973_Rep8387.pdf

HABITAT NEEDS OF NATIVE POLLINATORS

Good pollinator habitat requires a diverse mix of native plants to bloom throughout the entire season especially during mid-summer to provide a food source of both pollen and nectar. In addition non-tilled bare ground, over grown fields and decaying trees provide great nesting sites. The type of pollinator determines the type of plants needed

Bees typically visit flowers that are purple, violet, yellow, white and blue. Butterflies visit a similarly wide range of colors, including red, whereas flies are primarily attracted to white and yellow flowers. By having several plant species flowering at once, and a sequence of plants flowering through spring, summer, and fall, habitat enhancements can support a wide range of pollinator species that fly at different times of the season.

If you have bee allergies in the family it is quite possible to plant Pollinator colors near a house and Bee colors away from the active family area. For example a 'red' garden on or near a patio would not draw bees.

PPNH Partner Events

Kensington CC is kicking off the season in late April or early May with a seed event.
Location and date to be announced..

Atkinson is starting the Spring with a seed event to be held on April 10th at
Freshwater Farms, Rt. 111, Atkinson

Pollinator Pathways NH - Kingston - is hosting a Spring Ephemeral and Wildflower walk on May 1st

All events are open to the public

Spring advice from National Wildlife Federation

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgxwLsdGLCMVZRsxWVqhDTqsXTWxJ>

Don't forget that if you plant a veggie garden you can mix herbs, native flowers, and vegetables near each other sharing the same space. The result is pollinator Heaven!

This is a Pattipan Squash plant.

Have fun thinking about Spring!
Marghi Bean
Pollinator Pathways NH

