

How Does Your Garden Grow: The Pollinator Garden at the Quogue Library

It began with a question one fall day on a zoom meeting with a couple of provisionals and some seasoned members of the Westhampton Garden Club, "would anyone be interested in doing a holiday flower sale for the garden club?" "Yes!" "Sure!" "Count me in!" We were in business, almost. A suggestion was made that it might be nice to sell amaryllis for the holidays but we would need to source the bulbs and pots and soil and print up directions with pictures. The Westhampton School District generously gave us the use of their greenhouse to raise the bulbs and we were able to work safely, had plenty of ventilation and were given the opportunity to get to know each other as we planted and watered and wrapped and delivered our bulbs in time for the Chanukah and Christmas holidays.

We had such a great time that we decided to do it again but this time we wanted to support a specific project. "How about raising money for the Pollinator Garden at the Quogue Library?" "What about an orchid sale?"

The Amaryllis Team became the Pollinator Team. Orchids were sourced and acquired from The Bianchi and Davis Greenhouse in Riverhead. The Westhampton Garden Club posted the order form with an explanation of the importance of Pollinator Gardens for the health of our biodiversity here on Long Island. We became educated through our conservation seminars, learned how our local bird populations were threatened, which can be traced back to the use of pesticides and the loss of the native plants that sustain the life of insects our birds depend on for food. We became aware of the 2/3 For the Birds Project started by Edwina von Gal. Her mission is to educate us about the importance of native plants and pollinators for the health of our diminishing bird populations. For every three plants we add to our garden make sure two of them are native, and this will help sustain our birds by providing them with the food sources they need. That means the insects they attract will be just what they will be looking for. Remember, birds and bats eat bugs and they also eat the pests we humans are bothered by-- lots of mosquitoes

We're collaborating with the library to develop educational materials about the garden for adults and children. We hope that people who visit see plants that they love and can incorporate in their own gardens. For most of us, adding natives and pollinator plants is a matter of finding spots in our already planted gardens, and increasing their number over time. Here are some of the plants you'll see when you visit this garden:

Early Summer

Lobelia cardinalis (Cardinal Flower), a known favorite of hummingbirds

Baptisia (Wild Indigo), a large perennial with purple- blue flowers and beautiful glaucous foliage

Cuphea (Cigar Plant), an orange flowered annual that attracts “long nose” insects and hummingbirds

Mid-Summer

Monarda fistulosa (Bee Balm), a perennial with bright red flowers crowded with hummingbirds

Clethra alnifolia (Summersweet), a small shrub with sweetly scented white flowers

Asclepias tuberosa (Butterfly Milkweed), the orange flowered plants that are critical for Monarchs

Agastache hybrids (Hyssop), annuals that bloom all season in pink, coral, and orange

Late Summer, Fall

Eupatorium (Joe Pye), a tall perennial with pinky purple flowers

Aster, which blooms just when other things seem to be on hold

Helianthus (Sunflower), an annual from seed that supports birds and insects

There’s more, including teepees planted with Hyacinth Beans, Morning Glories and Moonflowers, so plan to see this garden at various times during the season.

Here are the people on the Pollinator Team: Peggy Veziris, Team Leader, Kelly Bennett, Donna Levy, Nancy Lombardi, Melissa Morgan Nelson, Ki Nobiletti, and Alicia Whitaker.

By Peggy Veziris & Alicia Whitaker

