

## MARBLEHEAD REPORTER

# New push to plant pollinator gardens in Marblehead

*Find out why it's important*

**Leigh Blander/Special to the Marblehead Reporter**

Published 6:01 a.m. ET Oct. 5, 2021

Kathy Bradford, a landscape architect who lives in Marblehead, has planted pollinator gardens around her home over the last several years, hoping to attract more native bees and butterflies.

“The more pollinator and native plants that people put on their properties, the better off we all are as a town, as a community, and getting bigger than that,” she said.

Pollinators are insects or animals that transfer pollen between plants, helping those plants produce seeds. Pollinators include bees, moths, butterflies, birds, and bats.

Pollinators have a big impact -- creating \$200 billion in crops every year, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. But in recent decades, there's been a dramatic drop in bee and pollinator populations. Why? Pesticides and climate change are two reasons.

**So in Marblehead, folks are taking action.**

“We know that the pollinators have been threatened lately and it's quite an easy thing to do, to change out your lawn to more of a meadow, or even put some containers on your patio, to help the pollinators thrive. It's not just to save them, but we need those pollinators for our food,” said Mary Ellen Miller with Sustainable Marblehead, which is launching a Pollinator Action Plan.

“We want to work with households right here in Marblehead to help them establish pollinator gardens, to help our local bees, hummingbirds, and pollinator insects,” Miller said.

Sustainable Marblehead has created a Pollinator Action Plan page, <https://www.sustainablemarblehead.org/working-groups/conservation>, with information on how to create household pollinator gardens, including which native plants to include. The

group is also sponsoring a survey to learn more from residents interested in pollinator gardens. The survey can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZXGNNBM> and is active until Oct. 10.

Miller says Sustainable Marblehead is partnering with the town Recreation & Parks Department to explore planting pollinator gardens on town-owned property. It is also working with the Marblehead Conservancy, which is planting a 4.5-acre wildflower and pollinator garden at the old Lead Mills.

“Everybody knows about honeybees, which are primarily used for apples, peaches, corn, tomatoes - most of the agricultural crops. But there are lots of other pollinators that tend to get ignored,” said the Conservancy’s Don Morgan. “We’re after a diversification of pollinators. We’ve hired an expert to tell us which flowers attract which pollinators.”

Some of the pollinator-friendly plants at Lead Mills now include milkweed, field thistle, grass-leaved goldenrod, highbush blueberry, and flowering raspberry.

Students at the Tower School have been growing violets, which attract sweet bees and mason bees, in their greenhouse. They’ll help plant the flowers at Lead Mills this fall.

Sustainable Marblehead is also working with a local condo complex to convert its annual flower gardens and containers into native pollinator gardens. And it’s collaborating with Marblehead Garden Center.

“They’ll work with us in the spring to set up a section with native pollinator plants,” Miller said.

Bradford, who also volunteers with Sustainable Marblehead, encourages everyone to choose pollinator-friendly plants. Some of her favorites include fall aster, cone flowers, and summer phlox.

“I try and educate my clients,” she said. “I’d like to see more pollinator gardens pop up.”