



*Restoring Habitat, One Yard at a Time*

April 2021

Hello Everyone,

When it comes to pollinators, gardens, native plants and habitat there is SO much that can be talked about in the Spring. It's like outdoor overload. In my experience most New England gardeners wallow in the overload and love it. Just dressing in light weight clothes and working up a sweat can be a wonderful thing.

In looking through my files I found a paragraph in an old PPNH letter from April 2019. –

**Doing less -having more** – Attracting birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife to your yard can be as simple as doing less. Do less mowing. Do less gardening because most native plants are perennials. Do no spraying of chemicals. Do more enjoying the butterflies and creatures that are so beautiful.



Think of it this way. For a minute think Birdfeeders. When your neighbor puts out ten bird feeders and you put out only one, all the birds and chipmunks and squirrels are next door at your neighbor's banquet. It is no different for pollinators and beneficial insects. They will come to your banquet when you put it out.



Pollinator Pathways NH uses three statements that are a foundation of pollinator conservation: Mow less-and higher. Use native plants as much as you can. Use no chemicals. 'Use no chemicals' can be a sneaky one. Many of the plants in the 'big box stores' and some garden centers are treated with neonicotinoid insecticides as they are growing. The result of this is when a pollinator lands on the flowers of these plants looking for nectar they are poisoned. Examine plants carefully and ask lots of questions.

**Beneficial Insects** There are beneficial insects in your garden and all over your property. You see them faster if they're on a plant that you really like. It could be a flower or a tomato. . When you see some damage on your plants don't panic. You'll know you have a yard that's a habitat of living things when you see some damage done by bugs. All bugs are not bad. There is an army of pest control insects. Here is a list of insects that most people either swat or run from. This is just a few of them. There are others:

**Lady Bugs** – Native biological control by eating pests like aphids

**Predatory Wasps** (Mason Bees are one of these) These are pollinators who feed their larvae with pest insects.

**Flower flies**– good pollinators. They look like tiny wasps but are harmless to people. They are interested in plant pests like aphids, soft caterpillars and other soft bodied insects

**Soldier beetles** mainly feed on pollen and nectar. They do NOT damage flowers or other plants and are also harmless to people. They are beneficial because they are predators (larvae) and pollinators (adults). There is no need to control them.

You can plant marigolds and goldenrod to attract these beneficial garden insects.

All of these insects and many more benefit from being able to winter over in dead leaves, grasses and bark on the ground. If you shred leaves, bag them or bring them to the dump there are hundreds of “good” insects lost. It is a generation of beneficial insects that won’t help your gardens and lawns. Leaves are great mulch. Spring or Fall. Rake leaves to the edge of lawns or into piles where they don’t get in your way. Put

garden clippings next to a brush heap. Brush heaps are beneficial for a lot of the pollinator insects as well as other wildlife. Build an ecosystem on your property. You will see the results next year and the following years. You will see more butterflies and beneficial insects and other wildlife on your property. Brush heaps don’t need to be big.



**Speaking of bugs...of course, the bane of the outdoors –mosquitoes**

Please read the following National Wildlife article (April/May issue): (copy and paste)

<https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2021/April-May/Conservation/Mosquitoes>

( \*note on the article- New England has no Red Slider Turtles)



Also in the same National Wildlife issue is an interesting article about milkweed and monarchs:

**Mowing for monarchs?** While conservationists generally advise homeowners to minimize mowing to benefit wildlife, recent studies in midwestern grasslands found that cutting back milkweed plants at key times of year actually boosts populations of declining monarch butterflies. Writing in Biological Conservation, entomologists from Michigan State University report that strategic mowing of mature milkweed benefits monarchs in part because the butterflies lay more eggs on the new growth that sprouts afterwards. Milkweed is the only host plant for monarch caterpillars. As a food source, the plant is “more like spinach when it’s young and comparable to cardboard as it ages,” says lead author Nate Haan. In addition, the researchers found that fewer

predators visit immature milkweed, preferring to hunt on the plant’s more-developed flowering stages. Mowing small areas, the entomologists report, results in three to 10 times more eggs per stem on this new growth. They also say that gardeners who cultivate milkweed can conduct their own experiments—by mowing or trimming about a third of a milkweed patch in mid-June, when the stems are beginning to flower; cutting another third in mid-July, when the mowed stems have grown back; and leaving the rest undisturbed throughout the growing season.

**Composting and How to Plant a Butterfly Garden** Katherine Carney Feldman writes wonderful blogs. In these two she covers all you need to know about composting and planting a butterfly garden. Go to [shamrockenvironmental.weebly.com](http://shamrockenvironmental.weebly.com) and click on ‘Blog’

Spring this year came in like a lion  
and the lion stayed for quite a while.

It’s nicer now. Enjoy the sun and happy gardening.

Marghi Bean  
Pollinator Pathways NH

