

Pollinator PATHWAYS *New Hampshire*

Restoring Habitat, One Yard at a Time

Sept. 2020

Fall is a wonderful time of the year. The days are less hot (usually) and the nights are cool (usually) Of course this is New England that we're talking about. Some year's nothing seems normal. 2020 is one of those not-normal years. We are in a drought and have been since Spring (on and off).

When I was digging in my gardens this Spring I could dig down two feet and it would still be dust. We did get some rain over the summer months but we are now back to digging in the dust. It is frustrating.

Town water is restricted in many towns and people with wells are being careful not to run their well down too far.



My salvation has always been soaker hoses. Even now you can run soaker hoses on the top of the ground next to plants that are desperate for a 'drink' and save them. In these drought conditions I turn on the water for soaker hoses just a half turn or so. It doesn't seem like much but if it runs for an hour or more the plants will get enough water to save them. The old rule holds true – early morning or in the evening, after sundown, is watering time.

Drought conditions are tough on birds, pollinators and all wildlife. For Butterflies it is easy to provide a spot for them to "puddle". "Puddling" is when they get moisture from soft wet earth. They need to "puddle" as it provides the critical minerals that are missing from nectar. A "puddling" station is easy to make in a sunny area near butterfly-friendly flowers. Set out a shallow pie pan or

dish – put a shallow layer of earth in it. Put a sponge in the center and put some small flat stones around the sponge. Thoroughly soak the sponge to the point where it is leaking into the earth and making mud. Pollinators will land on, and get drinks from, the sponge and the mud. Check it every day to make sure it's moist. At my house "puddling" happens around the horse's water tub but a small version works just fine. If you have flowers on a deck or patio this small watering station will work well. You'll be amazed at who shows up. Don't be afraid of the bees. They need water too.

Many Perennial gardens would benefit from deadheading by this time of year.

Emma Erler @UNH Cooperative Extension has a blog for gardeners: Outside With Emma Erler. This is from one of her blogs: "Most flowering plants expend a tremendous amount of energy on seed production, which in turn takes away from root and shoot development and future flowering potential. Deadheading will also encourage many plants, especially annuals, to rebloom."

Fall is a good time to collect seeds from gardens and from Native plants that are wild. Seeds can be kept in a cool, dry place until later in the Fall or until Spring.

It is during the Fall that people become the most aware of pollinators. This is mainly due to the popularity of Monarch Butterflies and the fact that they fly thousands of miles from Mexico to be here in the Spring and thousands of miles back to Mexico in order to over winter. It takes an entire year to complete the annual monarch butterfly migration from central Mexico to the eastern U.S. on to southern Canada then back again to Mexico. To do this it takes 3 generations of butterflies to move north from Mexico.



To help with the success of this migration Monarchs need host plants in the Spring (Milkweed) and nectar plants in the late summer. (At my house they like Jerusalem Artichokes and Mexican Sunflowers best) They need a good source of nectar in the Fall to give them nutrition for their trip south.

If you want more information on what some scientists are doing to help Monarchs go to: <https://monarchjointventure.org/blog/monarch-spotlight-m3-monarch-migration-study>

Monarch Joint Venture has an amazing program. They have developed a teeny, tiny, location device that can be attached to a Monarch's body. Project members can follow the migration and know exactly where the monarchs are in their travels. MJV members have confirmed that Monarchs can fly without any noticeable problems.



One thing that makes the iconic Monarch butterfly an extraordinary insect is that their migration and population span a large geographical area. They touch the lives of people across North America and beyond. To support their lifecycle they require different habitats, resources, and conservation practices across this expansive range. This creates opportunities for you and others to be a piece of this conservation puzzle and focus on improving a mixture of habitats for this imperiled insect.

What can we do? We can do what we are doing now. Plant native plants (like milkweed) use no pesticides and mow less lawn and mow higher. With everyone doing these steps, healthy habitat for pollinators will become the norm and scientists will have more Monarchs to put monitors on. We will be part of the scientist team as well as part of our pollinator friendly community.



If you would like a Pollinator Pathways NH sign

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