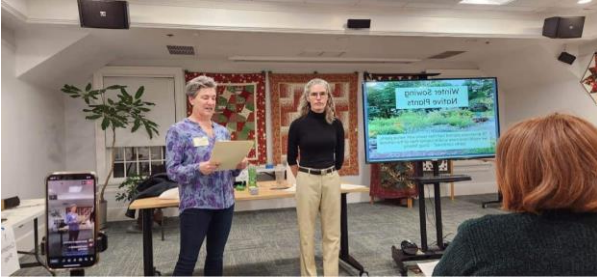


## Community Through Native Plants



Recently the Booth Library hosted *Winter Sowing Native Plants* in cooperation with Protect Our Pollinators and Gardeners of Newtown Facebook Group. It was well attended, in fact there was a waiting list. The presentation's focus was why native plants are important to wildlife and the technique of winter sowing the seeds, the perfect path to growing your own native plants.

So why write about an event that is over? Because it was an amazing moment to see different groups of people from our community coming together to learn a technique to not just beautify their yards, but more importantly to support life. They weren't just interested in learning how to do it, but more importantly why growing native plants is necessary. Participants were enthusiastic as they shared their stories of what natives they already had growing in their yards, yet realizing they all needed to plant so much more to sustain bees, birds and butterflies. They were open to learning more than just "monarchs need for milkweed as host plants", and instead learned how *Pearly Everlasting* was a host plant to American and Painted Lady butterfly caterpillars.

Something else that I observed was how the community handled relatively new information. Many times, as gardeners, when we hear about something that is different from what we learned in the past, we are not always able to embrace new fact-based ideas. Winter sowing was a new technique to most of the participants, yet they were eager to hear why native plants like *Boneset* were necessary, as well as the technique for germinating it. Their desire to learn about plants like *Large-leaved Aster* created an energy that made me sit back and smile.



What was I seeing? I believe I saw a community of gardeners together for something bigger than just learning a new gardening technique. I believe I saw different groups of people come together because they care about what is happening not only in their yards, but in their community. I believe I saw a group of people realize they can make an impact on the environment by starting in their own yard by what they choose and not choose to plant. I saw a community of like-minded people coming together to make a difference. They weren't just talking about making a difference, they were participating in a plan that would make a difference by their actions, not just their good wishes.

As we start looking towards spring, do you have a plan to make your yard more sustainable to wildlife? As you look through the seed catalogs and visit various nurseries, are you choosing native plants that are necessary to feed our birds like *Joe Pye Weed* because bird feeders don't feed our birds babies but caterpillars [that feed on native plants] do. Can we have a community of people that are like minded and active in protecting wildlife? I think we can.

If anyone would like to know more about winter sowing of native plants, please reach out to me, Lisa Shirk at [Lisahirk62@gmail.com](mailto:Lisahirk62@gmail.com).