

Newtown Approves a Native Plant Policy by Holly Kocet

The Town of Newtown has approved a Policy requiring the use of Native Plants on municipal properties. A requirement for the use of native plants will help mitigate the effects of habitat loss and fragmentation and the proliferation of non-native exotic species in town landscapes. Approval of this Plan shows the Town's willingness to preserve and maintain healthy ecosystems, ensuring the well-being of our community now and for future generations.

It is our hope that Newtown's Plan will encourage landowners to plant for wildlife and inspire neighboring towns to enact native plant policies of their own. The inclusion of local native plants in all private and public landscapes has become increasingly important for many reasons:

- **Local native plants are essential for maintaining healthy ecosystems and all living things.**
- Native plants promote healthy watersheds; filtering pollutants and stabilizing banks.
- Native trees are more efficient for sequestering carbon than imported species.
- Forest trees are critical for combating climate change; however, they are diminished and fragmented with ever-increasing development.
- Land Trusts and Open Spaces are hugely beneficial for preserving our wild places but will never be enough to provide for the diverse wildlife on which our world increasingly relies.
- "Non-native exotic ornamental trees and shrubs are replacing our native plants in suburban gardens on which wildlife increasingly depends." – **Doug Tallamy, Entomologist, Univ. of Delaware.**
- "All wildlife depends on native plants for survival, providing food and shelter for 10-15 times more species of birds, butterflies and other wildlife than non-native species." – **CT Audubon.**
- "Native plants, which are adapted to local soils and climates, are usually the best sources of nectar and pollen for native pollinators. Incorporating native wildflowers, shrubs, and trees into any landscape promotes local biological diversity and provides shelter and food for a diversity of wildlife." – **Xerces Society of Invertebrate Conservation.**

Newtown's Native Plant Policy, proposed by the Conservation Commission, has the endorsement of **Protect Our Pollinators** and the **Pollinator Pathway Northeast**. Newtown's Policy can be viewed at www.newtownconservation.org.