

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Toby's Native Plant Garden

Toby has inspired us with the native plant garden he created. We asked him to share what he's learned about native gardens and resources to learn more!

What is the purpose of a native plant garden?

They have a lot of advantages, but for me, the greatest purpose has been supporting pollinators and birds.

Adult pollinators need a wide variety of flowering plants, both for pollen and food, but butterfly and moth caterpillars need specific host plants, usually native plants, to feed off. One example of a host-plant relationship is monarchs and milkweed. Native plants also confer a number of benefits to other pollinators like bees, wasps, flies, and hummingbirds.

Many songbirds feed their young a diet of primarily caterpillars, so having native plants helps support the complete life cycle of pollinator species and promotes healthy bird populations.



Showy goldenrod, Little bluestem, Dotted horsemint, New England aster

What resources do you recommend to someone wanting to learn about native plant gardens?

- Doug Tallamy's books *Bringing Nature Home* or *Nature's Best Hope* are great sources! And he is on many podcasts.
- Heather Holm's books on the relationships between pollinating insects, especially bees, and native plants, are available at Burlington Library.
- Another great way to learn is just getting some native plants from a local nursery, planting them and seeing what happens!

Thank you, Toby!

BurlingtonGreen also has some great resources on this topic:

- [BG's New Pollinator Garden](#)
- [Guide to Finding Native Trees, Plants & Seeds](#)



Anise hyssop, Swamp rose mallow, Joe pye, Cardinal flower, Virginia mountain mint

What inspired you to create one?

In 2019, I attended a Halton Conservation workshop about managing water on residential properties, and at a session on native plants the enthusiastic and knowledgeable presenter gave out free native plant seeds to everyone.

I had always been interested in nature and ecosystems, but that night, something clicked, and from there, I set out to make our whole property native plants. Fast forward four years, and we have over 160 species planted.