



PROJECT Somerville Pollinator Action Plan

LOCATION Somerville, Massachusetts

FIRMS Offshoots Inc. and City of Somerville Division of Public Space & Urban Forestry

Here, Luisa Oliveira, ASLA, director of Public Space & Urban Forestry, and Alison Maurer, ASLA, the

city Planner of Ecological Restoration, share the plan's recipe for success.

The plan integrates both aesthetic and ecological considerations. How did you balance these goals in the design of pollinator-friendly landscapes?

Oliveira: In order for a landscape to sustain pollinators, it can be "naturalistic" or very "designed." We tried to leave room for all types of gardens with a focus on plant selection to create habitat. The plan is useful to landscape designers and residents alike, as it gives knowledge of which plant feeds which species and gives users the ability to mix and match and decide how they want to plant their garden.

Cristian Umaña

In the Pollinator Pantry section of the plan, there are plant lists designed for our six mascot pollinators, plant lists inspired by the Middlesex Fells, and many recipe cards that are site condition-specific and designed for aesthetics. Each recipe includes a planting diagram and a carefully selected group of plants to pick from. There are designs for garden pots if all you've got is a porch, designs for verges along a street that need to withstand salt and snow, plant lists for converting a lawn, and a Somerville-specific top 10 pollinator-friendly plant list. The more people who are involved—in whatever way they can be—the better.

Sustaining pollinator habitats is crucial. What ongoing maintenance practices and community education initiatives are included in the plan to ensure the longevity of these ecosystems in Somerville?

Oliveira: Within the city, we now look at maintenance practices through a pollinator-informed lens. We have made strides with our Department of Public Works to change some practices and have written pollinator-informed requirements into our specifications on other projects.

Maurer: The plan outlines creative ideas and opportunities to educate the community through our nonprofit partners and community institutions. This includes curriculum and media resources for educators and ideas like a pollinator plant food truck, a Pollinator Ambassador program, and educational workshops for local landscapers on pollinator-friendly maintenance.



How has the plan affected the community?
Maurer: We have seen a lot of excited reactions, especially from residents who already care about pollinators but just want some guidance on what to do and what to plant. This plan gives quick and easy answers to those questions. You can plant a few plants and see insects arrive in a day or two. We have seen that in the demonstration garden in front of Somerville City Hall that was planted by volunteers in June 2024 and already attracts so many types of pollinators. ♦



Landscape architects, community members and city staff in Somerville, Massachusetts, work together to create vibrant pollinator habitats, providing essential food sources for local species. The collaborative Pollinator Action Plan offers residents practical gardening designs to support the city's 300 documented pollinator species.

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