

Village of Ardsley Pollinator Pathway

Annual Progress Report June 1, 2022 – May 31, 2023

The following annual progress report summarizes the activities and progress of the Ardsley Pollinator Pathway for the fiscal period of June 1, 2022 to May 31, 2023.

I. Brief History of the Ardsley Pollinator Pathway

The Ardsley Pollinator Pathway is part of the Ardsley Climate Advisory Committee, which was created by resolution of the Village of Ardsley Board of Trustees on July 1, 2019. The Committee, with full support of the Mayor and Trustees, developed the *Ardsley CAN by 2030!* initiative (now renamed *Ardsley CAN!*) in the summer of 2020 with a launch in the fall of the same year.

The acronym **CAN** reflect the three pillars in the program:

- C:** Carbon Reduction
- A:** Act Sustainably
- N:** Neighbor by Neighbor

The Ardsley Pollinator Pathway primarily falls under A: Act Sustainable, but also supports C: Carbon Reduction and N: Neighbor by Neighbor.

The mission of the Ardsley Pollinator Pathway (APP) is *to make significant change, one yard at a time*, which primarily focuses on the biggest lever for change in Ardsley: homeowners. In support of this mission the APP Steering Committee identified four key initiatives that drives action toward the mission:

1. **Outreach and Education** to change hearts and minds
2. **Creating Habitat** to build healthy ecosystems and support pollinators
3. **Partnership** to leverage and accelerate change
4. **Policy** to drive change

In addition to the above mission and initiatives the APP grew its steering committee in 2023 and the team now consists of: Ruchi Agarwal, Rebecca Arkin, Linda Azif, Linda Caldwell, Kathy Evers, Alison Gilmore, Julie Larkin, Jen Nordhem, Dina Paterson and Carol Sommerfield (chair). Steve Edelstein is our Trustee Liaison.

II. 2022/2023 Progress and Accomplishments

The 2022/2023 year was a very successful one for the APP. Our distribution list expanded from 200 interested participants to over 500, and APP steering committee members were requested

as guest speakers at local events and meetings. The [Rivertowns Enterprise and others](#) continued to advocate for the APP and published more than 12 articles and picture features on APP events. This added to a significant increase in both awareness and attendance at APP events.

Progress during the 2022/2023 year will be categorized under the four APP initiatives.

1. **Create *habitat*** to build healthy ecosystems and support pollinators:

- **Maintained and expanded all three public pollinator gardens** (AFV, Hart's Brook and Ardsley Library Pollinator Garden) using various awarded grants from Bronx River/Sound Shore Audubon.
- **Performed 41 free In-depth garden consultations with residents**, with a focus on identifying and managing invasive plants in people's yards, as well as planting natives to support Monarch butterflies and other native insects. Since March, 2020, the APP provided more than 100 free garden consultations.
- **Supported the Mayors Monarch Pledge.** In 2022 Mayor Kaboolian signed the National Wildlife Association's Mayors Monarch Pledge. Ardsley was one of the few municipalities in North America honored with the [National Wildlife Federation's Mayors' Leadership Circle designation](#) for its actions in 2022 to help endangered monarch butterflies. Ardsley has again [signed up to help monarchs in 2023](#) through the NWF Mayors Monarch Pledge.
- **Identified and provided opportunities for residents to acquire native plants.** In March through June the APP partnered with Zoe's Native Plants in Dobbs Ferry to sell native plant plugs below retail cost to residents. The APP also provided free milkweed seeds, as well as other native plant seeds and seedlings, at events (Native Plant Swap, Native Seed Swap, Spring Garden Festival, library programs for kids). Residents were also informed of local native plant sales and purchasing opportunities through the APP website, newsletter, and email communications.
- **Fought invasives to create habitat.** Two vine cutting events were held in 2022/2023. Mayor Kaboolian and Trustee Edelstein worked with the Westchester Parks Foundation to hold an invasive plant removal event at Macy Park and the APP coordinated with the Saw Mill Coalition and the Westchester Parks Association to clear invasive vines from the South County Trailway in March. The cleared land on the trailway became a pollinator garden.
- **Created a step-by-step monarch butterfly garden mailbox garden guide for residents.** The guide provided residents with designs, material lists, plant lists, and step-by-step implementation instructions.
- **Partnered with organizations seeking to create pollinator habitats or community vegetable gardens that they will fund and maintain.**
 - Worked with the Concord Road School Environmental Club to create two pollinator gardens at the school.
 - Guided the Ardsley High School Environmental Task force in the creation of Phase I of their pollinator garden at the school.
 - Worked with the PTA fundraising committee to offer some native plant options as well as vegetables and herbs as part of their yearly sales.

- **Delivered presentations to other organizations promoting pollinator/native plant gardening.** Kathy Evers presented information on how to create a pollinator habitat at the annual meeting of the Bronx River Parkway Reservation Conservancy. Carol Sommerfield was the keynote speaker at the kickoff of the Dobbs Ferry Pollinator Pathway and was a guest on Paul Feiner's radio program to discuss the value of pollinator gardens and sustainable landscaping.
- **Stretch Goals Still to be Achieved:**
 - **Pollinator and Vegetable Garden at Woodlands Temple.** Woodlands Temple had expressed interest in creating a vegetable and pollinator garden in 2023, however, the plans were not realized.
 - **Work with DPW to support and promote native perennial plantings in the Village.** This goal has been moved to 2023/2024. In 2022 Ardsley passed a proclamation to support monarch butterflies through planting native plants in the village where possible.

2. ***Education and Outreach*** to change hearts and minds:

- **Pollinator Pathway website content enhancement.** The website was expanded in 2022/2023 to include additional actionable advice for homeowners.
- **Delivered the first Ardsley Spring Gardening Festival.** The APP partnered with the Ardsley Garden Club to produce this one day event for the community. Workshops, educational sessions, free plants, a plant pre-order sale, and a community monarch butterfly art project were all part of the festivities. This very successful event drew more than 100 adults and children.
- **Performed education/activities for kids and teens.** The APP made a strategic decision to focus more on the younger generations during 2022/2023. Numerous programs and initiatives were targeted at partnering with schools and families to educate and create habitat.
- **Created a Monthly Pollinator Pathway Newsletter (September – June).** The newsletter was expanded in 2022/2023 to cover an in-depth theme each month plus support our key focus on kids, educating residents on how to create pollinator gardens, information on nature in their yards, and reducing pesticides/promoting sustainable landscape practices.
 - **June**
 - Held the second annual Ardsley Garden Pollinator Tour and the first Ardsley PP free plant swap.
 - **September**
 - Community outreach through a table at the *Welcome Back Ardsley* community event.
 - **October**
 - Creation and delivery of an adult Zoom educational program: *Preparing Your Garden for Winter* (34 enrollees).
 - **November**
 - *Girl Scout Monarch Conservation Badge Project* (educational component and craft activity). Sixteen participants.

- Ardsley Library Children's Program: *Kid's Monarch Butterfly Event* (educational program with craft project). Twenty six participants.
- Creation and delivery of an adult Zoom educational program: *Letting Go of the Lawn: Rewilding a Suburban Yard, Part 1*. (70 enrollees).
- Thank you event for public garden volunteers, held at Hart's Brook Preserve pollinator garden.
- **December**
 - Annual *Ardsley Pollinator Pathway Free Seed Swap* and end of year celebration. Provided free native plant seeds to participants.
 - Ardsley Library Children's Program: *From Seed to Plant*. Educational program with seed planting activity. Twenty two enrollees.
 - APP Steering Committee end of year celebration event.
- **January**
 - Creation and delivery of an adult Zoom educational program: *Letting Go of the Lawn: Rewilding a Suburban Yard, Part 2*. (80 enrollees).
 - Attended and presented information on the APP at the *Great Westchester Pollinator Meeting* in Bedford, NY.
- **February**
 - Featured nationally renowned author, expert, and speaker Paul Tukey in an educational webinar, "*Organic and Awesome Lawns*". There were 79 enrollees.
- **March**
 - Partnered with the Ardsley Garden Club to offer the first community *Spring Gardening Festival*, which featured numerous educational sessions, a plant sale, free milkweed seedling giveaways, and a community art project.
 - Provided an educational workshop for kids, *Tomato Farming for Kids*.
- **April**
 - Featured identifying and managing invasive plants in a special April Earth Day newsletter.
 - Performed numerous in person and Zoom garden consults to help owners identify invasives and start native plant gardening.
- **May**
 - Partnered with Trustee Edelstein to hold a weeding event at Silliman Park. Education on weed identification was included.
- **Participated in the Ardsley High School Internship Program.** Ardsley senior Ian Ostoff worked with the APP during May and June on researching and writing portions of the APP newsletter, potting plants for the APP free plant swap, researching leaf blower restrictions in Westchester communities, and researching and producing articles for the newsletter guiding residents on how to support fireflies and reduce light pollution in their yards.
- **Delivered presentations to other organizations promoting pollinator/native gardening.** Kathy Evers presented information on how to reduce lawn to create a pollinator habitat at the annual meeting of the Bronx River Parkway Reservation Conservancy. Carol Sommerfield was the keynote speaker at the kickoff of the Dobbs Ferry Pollinator Pathway and was a guest on Paul Feiner's radio program to discuss the value of pollinator gardens and sustainable landscaping.

- **Goals on hold:**
 - **New resident outreach.** The previous new resident outreach produced no results. The program was expensive (postage) and time consuming (finding new residents in the Ardsley School District through Zillow). Based on the return for cost/effort, we chose to discontinue this program.

3. **Partnerships** to leverage and accelerate change

- **Partnered with the Ardsley Library** to deliver three hands-on workshops for kids:
 - *Kid's Monarch Butterfly Event*
 - *From Seed to Plant Workshop*
 - *Tomato Farming for kids*
- **Built a relationship and partnership with the Ardsley High School Environmental Task Force and the Concord Road Environmental Club** to create pollinator gardens at those schools.
- **Actively worked with the following stakeholders:**
 - The Village of Ardsley
 - Healthy Yards /Westchester Pollinators
 - Chaired the Native Plant and Ecotype Group (Westchester and Connecticut)
 - Partnered with
 - The Saw Mill Coalition
 - Groundworks Hudson Valley
 - The Westchester Parks Foundation
 - Westchester County
 - The Ardsley Scouts
 - The Dobbs Ferry Pollinator Pathway and other Rivertowns Pollinator Pathways
 - The Tarrytown TEAC and Pollinator Pathway
 - Partnered with and a member of the Ardsley Garden Club
 - Partnered with Ardsley Cares and the Greenburgh Nature Center

4. **Policy:** Drive policy for change

- Lobbied and actively supported the Birds and Bees Protection Act
- Researched leaf blower policies in the Rivertowns and elsewhere with the goal to prioritize and target meaningful and pragmatic policy changes for review by the Mayor and Board in 2023/2024.

III. Challenges Encountered

Over the past year we have identified a few challenges and risks.

1. The greatest challenge and risk for the Ardsley Pollinator Pathway are resources, mostly human. Thanks to the Village of Ardsley, the Pollinator Pathway is awarded a budget each year to support outreach and help fund community events. The main resource constraint is people: it is difficult to recruit volunteers. Post Covid people are living very packed lives with little time or energy to volunteer in the community. The Ardsley Pollinator Pathway relies upon a few dedicated volunteers to produce the majority of its programs and initiatives, almost all created by the volunteers. Burn out is a very real issue.
2. The second challenge is driving engagement with the Ardsley community. People live very busy lives, making it difficult to get their attention. The dire state of our ecosystem is not a priority for most people as they tackle growing families, rising inflation, disturbing world and national events, and other issues that, understandably, are a priority in their lives.

IV. Next Steps

APP will hold strategy sessions in August through September to set goals for 2023/2024. Goals will be aligned to our four strategic initiatives: Creating Habitat, Education and Outreach, Partnerships, and Policy. A report of the 2022/2023 goals will be supplied to the Mayor and Village Manager during 3Q23.

Respectfully,

The Ardsley Pollinator Pathway Steering Committee:

Carol Sommerfield (Chair); Ruchi Agarwal, Rebecca Arkin, Linda Azif, Linda Caldwell, Kathy Evers, Alison Gilmore, Julie Larkin, Jen Nordhem, Dina Paterson.