



Ashford Pollinator Pathway News

By Jennifer Sterling-Folker, June 2023

Greetings Ashford! Besides habitat loss & overuse of pesticides, what else is displacing the native plants that pollinators need? **INVASIVES!!!** Invasives are foreign plants introduced as landscape specimens that escape into the wild and, without the natural mechanisms of their home-range to control them, can quickly out-compete native plants. Many foreign plants are respectful guests in our gardens or have “naturalized” to become wildflowers used by pollinators. But some invasives are dangerous because they spread easily & rapidly, excrete chemicals to inhibit vegetation growth, smother the root system of surrounding plants, & provide little nectar for pollinators. They can take over entire forests as they displace & kill native plants, and getting rid of them is like a combination of “pick your poison + whack a mole.” Removing them can be extremely difficult, time-consuming, costly & there are so many of them spreading so rapidly!

Some of the Worst Offenders: Barberry, which spreads along water courses & is a known vector for ticks. Garlic Mustard, which still blooms to produce 1000s of seeds even AFTER its been pulled & put in a black plastic bag for two weeks! Multiflora rose, which forms dense, towering thickets with sharp, nasty thorns. Oriental Bittersweet & Mile-a-Minute, which are capable of killing trees with their twisting, smothering vines. But the invasive that strikes terror in my heart whenever I see a new patch of it along an Ashford roadside is JAPANESE KNOTWEED, considered the “Godzilla” of invasives!



It's similar to Bamboo in that it displaces everything in its path (even other invasives) & is extremely difficult to remove. Its deep taproot & twisting root system make it difficult to dig up, multiple mowings or spraying it with Roundup will

not kill it, & even a small root piece accidentally dropped elsewhere will root & grow which means its disposal has to be carefully controlled. The UK takes its spread so seriously that home-buyers cannot obtain mortgages for properties that have unabated Japanese knotweed.

Sadly, the state of CT does little to control the spread of invasives; in fact, its road-work practices help spread them & many invasives are still available for purchase at CT nurseries! There is a CT Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG; <https://cipwg.uconn.edu/about/>) which has work parties for invasive removal, but it's an ad hoc, volunteer group & the task of managing invasive plants is overwhelming. We can help by IDing & clean up invasives on our own properties & abutting roadsides. Use phone apps such as *PlantNet*, *Seek* or *PlantSnap* to easily ID invasives & see info at the CIPWG website on how to remove them.

Calendar

6/3, 10AM-2PM -- Windham Veggiestock, 5th Annual Food & Garden Festival, Lauter Park, Willimantic. Local music, art, food and some free plants

6/3-6/4 -- Grow Native Massachusetts Plant Sale, 240 Beaver St, Waltham, MA. Must register in advance, see info at: <https://gownativemass.org/Our-Programs/plant-sale>

6/10 & 6/11, 10AM-5PM -- **Annual Local Art and Garden Tour**. The tour is free and self-guided. Map and info at their website: <https://artgardenct.com>



6/24, 10AM-4PM -- **Ashford Arts Council Summer Event at Westford Hill Distillers**. Ashford PP will host a table with info & free native plant seedlings



We've started an online Ashford Pollinator Pathway Newsletter!

Email us to be added to the distribution list, if you have questions, if you'd like site/plant advice, for a list of local nurseries with native plants or to visit a native plant garden. Also let us know if you register your land with Pollinator Pathways so we can drop off a free medallion (courtesy of the Ashford Conservation Commission). Email: AshfordPollinatorPathways@gmail.com