

# The Cheshire Pollinator Pathway

**You may not have known this, but the Cheshire Pollinator Pathway came about from a nudge.**

Okay, there was also vision, enthusiasm, hard work, and the most awesome, dedicated bunch of people to pull it together.

Our backstory? Louise Washer from the Norwalk Watershed Association and Pollinator Pathway Northeast steering committee, spoke to a group of land trusts, garden clubs, and community conservation advocates in and around Cheshire back in 2019. After hearing Louise speak, we all jumped in—feet first!



Along with our conservation friends at Southington Land Conservation Trust (Shari Guarino) and the Hamden Land Conservation Trust (Gail Cameron and Jim Sirch), we began our journey. At the time, the Cheshire Pollinator Pathway was under the umbrella of Cheshire Land Trust.

Since that first meeting with Louise, each of us created our own Pollinator Pathway Garden(s). Each is an independent entity. However, we readily share resources and routinely do so, as does the original foundational group. **We are a unified movement.**

## The original Cheshire Pollinator Pathway Garden

The garden on North Brooksville Road, along the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, was designed by well-known landscape designer and native plant advocate Kathy Connolly. A core group of volunteers was instrumental in the success of this garden. Mind you, it was the beginning of COVID. We practiced safe distancing, wore masks, and used small work parties.

A year was needed to smother grass, kill invasives, and take down dead ash trees. During that time, we installed a “Summer Splash Garden”; a 63-foot strip of vivid, eye-popping color along the sidewalk fencing which framed the garden on the street side. This color explosion was used to create interest while the main garden was being prepared.

It was a mix of annuals and perennials, native (and some not) in bright color splashes. It was stunning and the response was amazing! People would stop on the walking trail to talk with us. Heck, people stopped their cars in the middle of traffic to yell out, “Great job,” and “Thank you!”

The original garden at 487 North Brooksville Road has been a huge success. It was completed in spite of COVID in the summer of 2021, thanks to the hard work of all-ages crew of fabulous volunteers, including those high school students from Cheshire, New Haven, Wallingford, and Meriden. We also had help from girls scouts and football teams.

## We Continue to Grow!

As of January 2020, the Cheshire Pollinator Pathway has joined the 501(c)3, Coalition for a Sustainable Cheshire, who act on our behalf as our fiduciary. **It's a perfect fit.**

Since that time, we have hosted educational talks at the Cheshire Public Library, focusing on native plants, pesticide use and insects. We've held on-site workshops and have regular, weekly volunteer workdays in the garden. Additionally, we send out a monthly newsletter with the goal to inform and raise awareness of pollinators and native plants.

It's crazy to realize we are so new and yet have accomplished an amazing amount of work. This includes our recent SustainableCT crowdsourcing event, where we raised more than \$15,000. It allows us to break ground on a new garden, directly across from the original garden and next to the very popular Lock 12 Historic Site. Kathy Connolly has signed on as project manager. This Pollinator Pathway oasis will be a habitat restoration to bring in native shrubs and trees, clear invasives and open the water view to the Willow Brook, which is as lovely as well as lively water body.

Finally, the Cheshire Pollinator Pathway has signed an agreement with the town of Cheshire to manage a new garden on the greenway, adjacent to Ball & Socket Arts. The name of this garden is the Cheshire Pollinator Pathway at West Main Street. Our intention is to transform this garden with the addition of native plants and educational signage.

Looking back, it may have been a nudge from Louise, but it certainly kicked us into high gear. I could not be prouder of our group and thankful to Donna Merrill, Louise Washer and the Pollinator-Pathway.net organization for getting all of us on the Pollinator Pathway.

Joy VanderLek, Director  
Joanna deBear, Assistant Director

### "Summer Splash Garden" Plant List

Blue Salvia  
Red Salvia  
Sunflower  
Purple Coneflower  
Zinnias  
Blazing Star  
Common Milkweed  
Swamp Milkweed  
Butterflyweed  
Mountain Mint  
Wild Bergamot  
Threadleaf Tickseed  
Black-eyed Susan  
Nasturtiums  
Partridge Pea  
Goldenrod varieties

