Pollinator Habitat Creation & Enhancement

The biggest accomplishment this year was the conversion of turf grass to pollinator patch in two separate areas of campus. The first was a 10x10 area in our student garden. The student garden is a fenced in area that contains several raised beds for vegetable gardening, a perennial herb spiral garden, and a fruit orchard with apples, grapes, and strawberries. At the start of the fall semester, a group of motivated EcoReps wanted to convert an unused portion inside the fence from grass to native plants for pollinators. Starter plants were purchased from a local company, Butterfly Effect, that specializes in native pollinator plants. Species chosen include: Great Blue Lobelia, Cutleaf Coneflower, Joe Pye Weed, Cardinal Flower, Button Bush, Boneset, and Purple Giant Hyssop. Also inside the student garden we added yard and tree debris from campus to serve as habitat for native ground bees and other pollinators. The second pollinator patch was installed between two of our main residence halls on campus. As this was in a prominent part of our campus, it featured a collaboration between the EcoReps, Grounds Department, and Communications Office. However, the motivation and site selection behind the project was all student-driven. After the grass was removed we spread several species of wildflower seeds including: Blue Wild Indigo, False Aster, Lance-leaf Coreopsis, Echinacea, and Prairie Sun Rudbeckia. We also planted bulbs for Bleeding Hearts and Liatris. Then the site was covered in mulch to overwinter. Our third project was the creation of twelve Grow Zones around campus. These are areas that were difficult and/or dangerous to mow, such as steep hillsides or small isolated strips. In these areas the grass was allowed to grow all year, and in the coming months we will be frost seeding a wildflower mix to allow flowers and grasses to grow together. This will provide food and habitat to our pollinators.
Education & Outreach

HWS hosted a series of 4 events titled "Pollination, Pollution and Your Plate." The programs were focused on mobilizing the commitments of Bee Campus USA on the Hobart and William Smith Colleges (HWS) campus and within the immediate Geneva community by raising environmental awareness and consciousness of pollinator habitats, air quality, and of the need to sustain pollinators.
Courses & Continuing Education

Please see the attached file that explains the topics and information for courses offered at HWS that discuss pollinator-related information.
Service-Learning

The installation of our pollinator patches were service-learning projects. Students volunteered their time and labor to create the pollinator patches that provide a service to our campus and a service to our pollinators. However, these projects were not just about providing labor. The students had to propose several locations to campus stakeholders and justify proposals. Through this process they learned how to engage with different campus departments and different personalities as well as how to use their feedback to find compromises and come up with the final solution. This helped the students develop intangible skills and understand the steps necessary to make change on campus and in their communities. Further, they researched and developed a list of native plants that are used by a variety of pollinators and then narrowed it down based on what plants work well for the different sites (soil type, sun exposure, moisture levels, etc.). Lastly, they learned different planting techniques including starting plants from seeds, bulbs, and transplanting seedlings while also learning which species had to undergo cold stratification.
Educational Signage

As part of the 12 Grow Zones built around campus we added a sign to each one. While the signs would be considered temporary, they were up all summer and fall and only taken down for the winter months. We plan to put the signs back out in spring time as a constant reminder to students, employees, and visitors of our initiatives to help make our campus more pollinator friendly. https://www2.hws.edu/grow-zones-established-on-campus/
Policies & Practices

On campus we follow an integrated pest management program. This means that we only use pesticides when absolutely necessary and after mechanical measures are utilized. These applications aid in cutting down unwanted invasives or undesirable plants from taking over beneficial plants, such as flowering perennials. These applications are also utilized to cut down on trimming. This helps reduce emissions produced by weed trimming machines. All applications are done according to New York’s Department of Environmental Conservation policies and are recorded and submitted yearly. Our grounds staff has several licensed applicators on our team. Each applicator has to attend several continuing education classes to keep this license. Additionally, we have selected areas on campus dedicated to be Grow Zones that will allow for increased habitat, emissions reduction, and pollinator growth.
A dedicated Grow Zone located on campus.

Learn More

https://www2.hws.edu/sustainability/projects-operations/#spaces

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