

The Pollinator Pilot Project has begun. Six congregations in the NEMN Synod ELCA are working on establishing a pollinator garden on their church property. These six congregations are: St. Andrews Lutheran in Grand Rapids, Our Redeemer Lutheran in Pine City, French River Lutheran in French River, Bethesda Lutheran in Malmo, Our Savior's Lutheran in Outing, and Bethlehem Lutheran in Twig.

The EcoFaith steering committee will be gathering information from these congregations as this project progresses. The steering committee members are: Rachel Wyffels, Kali Kadelbach, Tom Uecker, Mark Ditmanson, Mary Jo Mettler, John Sippola, Jan Bilden, Laura Raedeke, David Warner, Kristin Foster, and David Carlson. Three of these members (Mark Ditmanson, Laura Raedeke, and Tom Uecker) have experience working with native plantings and are available to give advice and field questions. The goal for the first year is just to keep the young plants alive and establish a good root system. Year two will involve continued plant growth and root development. Year three will be full blown pollinator plants ready for the pollinators.

In addition to the six pilot congregations, another six congregations are interested and considering future pollinator gardens. Information from the six pilot projects should be helpful.

So...here is some information from pilot projects.

From Jan Bilden (St. Andrews Lutheran in Grand Rapids)

Here's what has happened so far in Grand Rapids at St Andrews:

Our EcoFaith Advocates team, with Church Council and property committee support, tilled a strip of land next to some woods on our church property. The Pollinator Paradise seeds were sowed in early June and by the end of July, the grasses were about a foot high, interspersed with smaller flower species. A half dozen common milkweed plants which had been started in toilet paper tubes were transplanted in midJuly. Ironically, three native species including bellflower and yarrow were in bloom adjacent to the plot providing a spot of color.

From Mary Jo Mettler (Redeemer Lutheran in Pine City)

At Our Redeemer Lutheran Pine City we still have black plastic spread over the 24x 12 area that will be the pollinator garden. Bee houses for the solitary bees have been placed in several of the existing gardens. I will be requesting pollinator plants from the congregation in September and spreading the seeds Tom Uecker provided.

From Kristin Peterson (Bethlehem Lutheran in Twig)

After selecting a site on the church property Bethlehem Lutheran roto-tilled the area to prepare for planting earlier in the year. Recently, we took a look at the pollinator garden and something is growing. We're not sure what but we had the children sow the seeds in rows and there is

definitely something coming up in the rows. So I think that is a good sign. A high school student is watering the area regularly as a service project.

From Julie Swaggert (Bethesda Lutheran in Malmo)

Our small plot is doing fine. We have lots of oats and other species emerging. It will take a couple years to develop fully. Bethesda in Malmo has many beautiful gardens with emphasis on pollinator flowers and milk weed. Need some more rain now!

From Jan Peterschick (Our Savior's Lutheran in Outing)

The Creation Care Team at Our Savior's took a field trip to visit the Pollinator Garden at Lutheran Church of the Cross in Nisswa in late July. Our team wanted to better understand what our task would be in undertaking this project. We learned so much and are set to have a site visit with a staff member from the Crow Wing County Watershed District on August 10th. They will help us identify the best location, plant types and materials for building a raised bed garden. We hope to begin this process on September 11th, God Works Our Hands Sunday.

We are anxious to get plants in the ground before the snow flies so that Spring will give us a few more mature plants for the Monarchs to feed on.

From John Sippola (French River in French River)

French River will be adding a pollinator garden in addition to the rain garden and nature path already in place. An environmental education program for children was held earlier in the summer for children. The program was based on watershed ecology. Now a pollinator garden is in the near future.