

Colchester is certified as a **Community Wildlife Habitat** through the National Wildlife Federation since 2010; the first community in CT with this certification

Positive Shifts in How People Garden and Landscape

Source: <https://www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Impact/Sustainable-Gardening-Trends>

“For over 50 years, the National Wildlife Federation has been working hard to inspire people to improve how they maintain their own piece of the earth. The inspiration began in 1973, when USFWS scientists first proposed that the same habitat elements used in larger-scale wildlife restoration can be used in backyards and communities with significant results. Since then, this ecological approach to native plant landscaping is having a positive impact on biodiversity, people, and the climate. It all starts with a different approach than most people in the United States have been taught.

Over five decades into this work, we’re excited to share that research shows a real shift in how people are gardening. Gardening, and in particularly these sustainable gardening activities, experienced significant growth in 2020-2022. The good news is that trends are staying above pre-pandemic findings.

In 2023, a National Wildlife Federation commissioned study of U.S gardening consumers found that:

- 28 percent of U.S. adults (73.2 million) are purchasing plants that are beneficial for native bees, butterflies, and birds. *More than 1 in 4 persons, up from 25% in 2019.*
- 17 percent of U.S. adults (44.5 million) are purchasing plants that are native to their region. *Up from 14% in 2019.*
- 12 percent of U.S. adults (approximately 32.3 million) are converting parts of their lawn to a natural or wildflower landscape, subsequently reducing mowing (gas-powered mowers which churn out carbon pollution). *Up from 9% in 2019.*

In October of 2023, a seasonal survey conducted by NWF, found that:

- 82 percent of people surveyed are open to leaving fallen leaves and leaf layers to benefit wildlife and biodiversity.

As of 2024, over 300,000 habitats have become Certified Wildlife Habitats® with the National Wildlife Federation.”

Do you have what it takes to certify your property as a NWF Wildlife Habitat? Review the checklist below and see....



**NATIONAL
WILDLIFE
FEDERATION**

**Certified
Wildlife
Habitat®**

Habitat Essentials Checklist Worksheet

**Note: this checklist is only a tool to prepare your garden, please certify online at www.nwf.org/certifiedwildlifehabitat*

Use this walk-through checklist to confirm you have all the elements necessary to be certified. Note that your property may already have naturally-occurring habitat elements that count towards certification. Meanwhile, other features may be things that you can manually add to your garden to increase resources for wildlife. Some garden features may even meet more than one of the habitat essential requirements!

Please also be aware of any local ordinances or restrictions on what you can or cannot have in your garden and take care to follow them.

Native Plants

Native plants are the foundation of a wildlife habitat garden. They provide ample sources of food, cover and places to raise young. National Wildlife Federation recommends a habitat garden space strive for 70% native plants. As you prepare your garden for certification, consider how you can add more native plants to your space to provide the required habitat elements listed below.

Food

Your habitat needs to provide a minimum of **three** natural food sources for wildlife.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Native plants | <input type="checkbox"/> Seeds | <input type="checkbox"/> Host Plants for Caterpillars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nectar and Pollen | <input type="checkbox"/> Nuts/Cones | <input type="checkbox"/> Foliage/Twigs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fallen Leaf Layer | <input type="checkbox"/> Berries/Fruits | <input type="checkbox"/> Insects |

If you would like to supplement the natural food sources listed above for wildlife with a bird feeder, be sure to regularly clean and disinfect it.

Water

Your habitat needs **one** of the following to provide clean water for wildlife to drink and bathe. If an existing water source is visible from and adjacent to your property, that can count for this requirement.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bird Bath | <input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly Puddling Area | <input type="checkbox"/> Lake |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seasonal Pond | <input type="checkbox"/> Rain or Water Garden | <input type="checkbox"/> River or Stream |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Year-Round Pond | <input type="checkbox"/> Spring | <input type="checkbox"/> Ocean |

Cover

Your habitat needs at least **two** places for wildlife to find shelter from the weather and predators.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mature Trees | <input type="checkbox"/> Evergreens | <input type="checkbox"/> Pond or Water Garden |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bramble Patch | <input type="checkbox"/> Brush or Log Pile | <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Burrow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Groundcover | <input type="checkbox"/> Dense Shrubs/Thicket | <input type="checkbox"/> Leaving dead perennial stems 12-18 inches for overwintering insects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rock Pile or Wall | <input type="checkbox"/> Meadow or Prairie | |

If you would like to supplement natural cover sources listed above for wildlife with a roosting box, be sure to regularly clean and disinfect it.

Places to Raise Young

Your habitat needs at least **two** places for wildlife to engage in courtship behavior, mate, and then bear and raise their young.

- Host Plants for Caterpillars
- Mature Trees
- Meadow or Prairie
- Dead Trees (Snags)
- Dense Shrubs/Thicket
- Fallen Leaf Layer
- Pond or Water Garden
- Animal Burrow
- Hollow Stems

If you would like to supplement natural places for wildlife to raise young listed above with a nesting box or native bee house, be sure to regularly clean and disinfect it.

Sustainable Practices

You need to employ practices from at least **two** of the four categories below to help manage your habitat in a sustainable way. To better help wildlife, we advocate employing one or more practices from each category:

- Soil and Water Conservation
 - Planted Shoreline
 - Capture Rain Water from Roof
 - Xeriscape (water-wise landscaping)
 - Drip or Soaker Hose for Irrigation
 - Limit Water Use
 - Reduce Erosion
 - Use Mulch
 - Plant Densely
 - Rain Garden
 - Leave the leaves in garden beds and around the base of trees and shrubs.
- Controlling Non-Native Species
 - Remove Non-Native Plants and Animals
 - Practice Integrated Pest Management
 - Use Native Plants
 - Reduce Lawn Space
- Reducing Pollution
 - Eliminate chemical pesticides
 - Eliminate chemical fertilizers
 - Turn off outdoor lights at night
 - Replace outdoor lights with amber-colored LED bulbs
 - Eliminate or replace gas mowers and garden tools with electric or hand powered tools
- Reduce/Reuse/Recycle
 - Compost kitchen and garden waste
 - Eliminate use of plastic weed liners
 - Use leaves as natural mulch
 - Clean and reuse garden pots
 - Repair or borrow garden tools before repurchasing

Learn More Through Educational Resources

Interested in learning more about how to provide these habitat elements for wildlife? Go to <https://www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Plant-Native/Habitat-Essentials> or scan the QR code.





Do you care about Wildlife locally to help Colchester remain certified as a Community Wildlife Habitat by certifying your own property through the National Wildlife Federation?

Cost: \$25 application fee

Complete online application

<https://www.nwf.org/certifiedwildlifehabitat>

**Components of a Wildlife Habitat:
Food, Water, Cover, Place to Raise Young, and
Sustainable Practices**

Benefits to NWF Wildlife Habitat Certification

When you certify you will become a member of the National Wildlife Federation's Garden for Wildlife™ community and receive the following benefits:

- Personalized certificate
- A one-year membership in the National Wildlife Federation and subscription to National Wildlife® magazine
- 10% off the National Wildlife Federation catalog merchandise, including nesting boxes, feeders, birdbaths, and other items to enhance your wildlife garden
- Subscription to monthly Garden for Wildlife e-newsletter with gardening tips, wildlife stories, and other resources
- Exclusive option to purchase attractive garden signs designating your garden as a Certified Wildlife Habitat® with the National Wildlife Federation



For Parents:



Are your children familiar with Fireflies? Learn more at:

<https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Invertebrates/Fireflies>



GREENHOUR™
Powered by L.L.Bean

Encourage your children to spend time outdoors in nature every day; the National Wildlife Federation's Green Hour has an abundance of activity suggestions. <https://thegreenhour.org/>



Help children learn, play, grow through gardening.

See activities at <https://kidsgardening.org/>

Visit Cohen Woodlands and Colchester's StoryWalk

Ruby and Elizabeth Cohen Woodlands is a 206 acre open space park with so much to offer to view and get close to nature and wildlife – two ponds, large fields, three hiking trails, picnic tables and pollinator demonstration gardens developed and maintained by members of the Colchester Garden Club with many native plants supporting pollinators through the seasons. For a map of the park and brochure about the pollinator garden: <https://www.colchesterct.gov/parks-facilities/pages/ruby-and-elizabeth-cohen-woodlands>.

To learn more about the ColchesterStory Walk, see brochure: <https://www.colchesterct.gov/parks-facilities/files/storywalk-brochure>