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Potential wildlife conflicts

People occasionally have negative interactions with wildlife, typically with those species well-adapted to human habitation known as “generalists” (deer, skunks, woodchucks, beavers, mosquitoes). If you have problems with what you consider nuisance wildlife, check out these resources, which will help you understand why the wildlife are where they are, what they are doing there, and how to adapt to their presence, deter them, or protect your property from possible damage. In New Hampshire, contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s office of Wildlife Services at 603-223-6832. (Appendix D). A helpful book on this topic is *Living with Wildlife: How to Enjoy, Cope with, and Protect North America’s Wild Creatures around Your Home and Yours*, by Diana Landau and Shelley Stump.

FIELDS AND GRASSLANDS FOR NEW HAMPSHIRE WILDLIFE



Most New Hampshire fields and grasslands are remnants of earlier agricultural times. Native Americans and later European settlers cleared forestland for agriculture, timber and fuel wood. By the mid-1800’s, about 80 percent of New England was cleared for agricultural production, including livestock. Cleared pasture and cropland left fallow to recover its fertility provided substantial early-successional habitat in the form of grassland and mixed-shrub land/grassland. Consequently, there was an increase in the wildlife that depend on these areas including grassland birds like bobolinks, meadowlarks, and grasshopper sparrows, and a diversity of insects, reptiles, and amphibians, as well as predatory hawks and mammals.

When vastly richer farmlands opened up in the Midwest in the mid- to late-19th century, many New England farmers abandoned their fields and migrated west. Over time, these fields returned to forests. Today, New Hampshire remains the second most-

forested state. Much of the remaining land in New Hampshire not covered with trees has been developed, so those dwindling areas in fields and grassland are vital habitat for an array of wildlife, especially grassland birds.

If you have a field, consider these maintenance tips: To support bobolinks, the grassland bird with the lowest acreage requirements, a field should be at least 10 acres, alone or in conjunction with adjacent fields. Meadowlarks need at least 15 acres, and grasshopper sparrows require a minimum of 30 acres.

If you mow only once a year, just to keep the field open, wait until after August 1, (the later the better, to allow for young birds to fledge). Less-frequent mowing supports a greater diversity of wildlife, including insects, birds and mammals. It also yields a higher diversity of flowering plants, makes seedheads available for food and creates more thatch for cover.

By contrast, frequent mowing as for a hayfield produces important forage for fewer species such as deer and turkey. If you mow twice per year for a hayfield, consider waiting until August 1 for the first cut, to allow bobolinks to fledge their young. Also, use flushing bars on haying equipment, avoid mowing where birds are often seen, leave small patches such as edges or strips unmowed as nesting areas, and avoid or delay mowing in wetter areas.



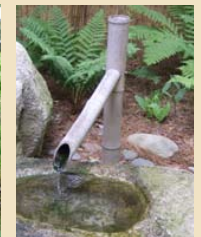
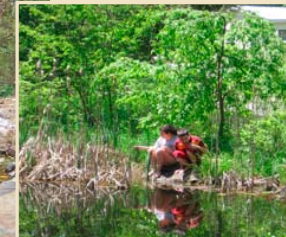
Fields and grasslands provide another habitat option in a largely forested landscape. Timing mowing to work with wildlife needs provides recreational and aesthetic benefits as well.

SIMPLE ENHANCEMENTS FOR WILDLIFE

- To invite more plant diversity into the landscape, add water (even something as simple as a half-barrel with a few wetland plants in it).
- Keep traditional plantings and vegetable beds close to the building, plant the wild garden along the perimeter of your property. The native plantings link up with wild gardens in neighboring yards/sites to have maximum impact of continuous habitat.
- Use structural components such as nest boxes to supplement plantings and replace missing habitat elements such as nesting trees and cavities.
- Where safe and feasible, leave snags (dead and decaying trees) standing, as they make great sites for birds to find insect food and nesting opportunities.
- Use wildflowers to bring color to your landscape, provide summer nectar, and yield fall seeds for the wildlife in your yard.
- Include densely branched shrubs to shelter birds’ nests from neighborhood cats and other predators.



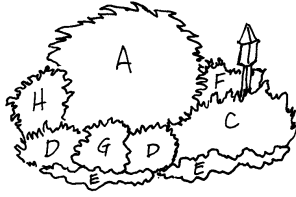
Above: Keep the traditional ornamental plantings close to the building, and plant the wild garden along the perimeter of the property, allowing the native plantings to link up with wild gardens in neighboring yards to maximize the size of continuous habitat.



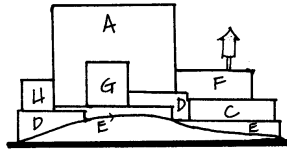
Water is an important component of wildlife habitat. Water features do not have to be large; even small depressions or bird baths support many forms of wildlife.

Model 12

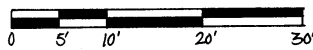
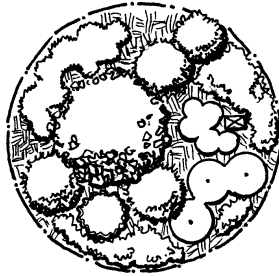
Conceptual Elevation View



Scale Diagram
or Box Elevation View



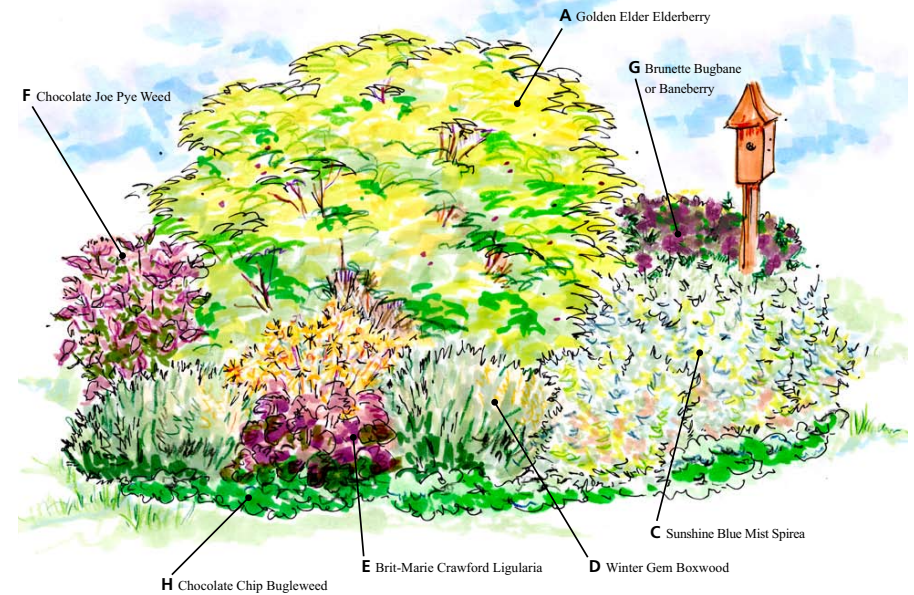
Planting Plan View



- | | |
|---|--|
| A Golden Elder Elderberry <i>Sambucus canadensis</i> 'Aurea' (1) | F Chocolate Joe Pye Weed <i>Eupatorium rugosum</i> 'Chocolate' |
| B Kalm's St. Johnswort <i>Hypericum kalmianum</i> (1) | G Brunette Bugbane or Baneberry <i>Actea racemosa</i> 'Brunette' (3) |
| C Sunshine Blue Mist Spirea <i>Caryopteris x. clandonensis</i> 'Sunshine Blue' (3) | H Chocolate Chip Bugleweed <i>Ajuga x 'Chocolate Chip'</i> |
| D Winter Gem Boxwood <i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Wintergem' (3) | I Running Tapestry Foamflower <i>Tiarella cordifolia</i> 'Running Tapestry' |
| E Brit-Marie Crawford Ligularia <i>Ligularia dentata</i> 'Brit-Marie Crawford' (1) | |

Model 12

Shown in late Summer





Wildlife activity around your site will fluctuate as the area develops. Certain species will meet their habitat needs in an early-growth vegetated area, while others will benefit from a mature plant community.

Care and maintenance tips for future years

Expand the landscape bed over time. As woody plants, such as shrubs and trees, grow, expand the edge of the bed to accommodate their new size. For perennials and groundcovers, divide and fill in open spots, move extras to another plant system, or join a plant swap. You can let nature take its course or choose to take a more active role. For example, move sun-loving perennials to the outer edge of the bed or to another garden and introduce shade-loving plants in their place, as the plant system matures.

Stay alert for potential new invasive species. As mentioned earlier, invasive species can migrate into your landscape from neighboring properties. By learning to identify them you can remove them early before they become a problem. However, in future years it is likely that new invasive species will become part

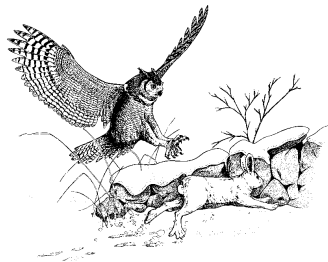
of New Hampshire and Northern New England's landscapes. Stay current with the list by visiting the NH Invasive Species Committee web site. (See Appendix D.)

Consider wildlife habitat as ongoing work. Wildlife activity around your site will fluctuate as the area develops. Certain species will meet their habitat needs in an early-growth vegetated area and others will benefit from a more mature planting. Allow your habitat to be a work in progress, adding additional plants or structures over time. You may wish to keep a log of the wildlife activity on your site, listing birds that feed and nest, for instance, or amphibians you observe.

Healthy plant systems grow and change over time

As natural landscapes grow and change over time, so will plant systems. Changes may occur suddenly and dramatically by the force of nature like an extreme weather event or they may evolve slowly as plants grow, mature, and compete for resources. Instead of trying to stop change, or "fix it," embrace the changes you see. Go back occasionally and see if your planting systems incorporate the integrated landscaping principles.

As plant systems mature, some plants will thrive while others may not. While you observe the landscape, you'll see plants that move toward the sun and others that stay in the shadows. Don't rush to make changes; see what the system does on its own. You'll be in for some interesting and pleasant surprises.



This viburnum seedling, discovered in a 15-year-old, now heavily shaded, plant system, provides an unexpected but welcome addition.



By following nature's lead, as this more mature plant system at the Nottingham, NH, Public Library demonstrates, vibrant and low maintenance spaces are created and become models for others.



Now, get up and get out!

Whether you've read this manual cover-to-cover or just skimmed through it, step outside right now and begin looking at your surroundings in a new way. You might begin by trying to find a

feature of your existing landscape you hadn't noticed before: the play of light and shadow on the ground below the old crabapple tree, a fleet of dragonflies flitting around a planting bed, or the way a layered planting area pleases the eye.

Can you see parts of your existing landscape that already follow nature's lead? Can you think of one small change you could make toward a more integrated landscape?

If you have plants that already provide food for wildlife, could you add a few more to create layers to provide wildlife cover, as well?

If you see an area of exposed soil, could you protect it with mulches and ground covers?

Is there an invasive plant species you could remove and replace with your first plant system?

By following nature's lead, you can make changes in your own outdoor space that really matter to the world around you, from the smallest unseen participants, such as microorganisms, to the larger players, including us. In the process, the landscape can become a model for others. Every small step taken leads toward a more integrated approach. As vibrant, useful yards and landscapes connect to one another, across neighborhoods and public spaces, the positive impacts will benefit the natural landscape, the air, water and soil, and all of the life that ultimately depends on it.