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Educate to Save Long Island's Farming Legacy

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By Legislator Anker's Office Published: August 26 2015

Suffolk County Legislator Sarah Anker, in cooperation with the nonprofit Mount Sinai Heritage Trust and with dozens of volunteers, planted the native plant pollinator garden ...

Mount Sinai, NY - August 25, 2015 - Suffolk County Legislator Sarah Anker, in cooperation with the nonprofit Mount Sinai Heritage Trust and with dozens of volunteers, planted the native plant pollinator garden at the North Shore Heritage Park in Mount Sinai on Tuesday, August 25th. The garden, a pilot program and part of the Educational Agriculture Support Initiative (EASI), includes a variety of native pollinator plants, which demonstrate the aesthetic diversity of Long Island plants while providing a habitat for pollinators.



After Legislator Anker was made aware that 90% of the Monarch Butterfly population has been decimated, and that our local farmers are importing bees to pollinate their farms, she created the EASI program through legislation that was unanimously supported by the county. The legislation she sponsored created a partnership with the Mount Sinai Heritage Trust to place an educational native pollinator garden at the Heritage Park.

"Monarch butterflies and pollinators are like canaries in the coal mines; once we lose them we lose our agricultural and environmental sustainability. The garden will help to educate the community about native plant species and the necessity of pollinators," said Legislator Anker. "I would like to thank Mount Sinai Heritage Trust for providing the space for the pilot program and I hope that after visiting the garden residents will be encouraged to create their own."

Visitors of the park will be able to utilize the garden as a learning tool. One of the main objectives of the EASI program is to provide native plant educational materials to Suffolk County residents.

"The pilot garden is a great example of another educational feature here at the Heritage Park," said Lori Baldassare, President of the Mount Sinai Heritage Trust. "We hope that local residents will utilize the garden as way to learn about our local farming legacy."

The garden was designed by Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District with plants donated by the Long Island Native Plant Initiative (LINPI). LINPI is an all-volunteer cooperative effort to preserve the genetic heritage of Long Island's native plant population. The Soil and Water Conservation District works to conserve soil and water resources, assist in the drainage and irrigation of agricultural lands, preserve wildlife and protect public land.

"The pollinator garden will highlight our beautiful blooms and showiest native plant species and the pollinators that the floral bouquet attracts," said Polly Weigand, Senior Soil District Technician of Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District. "Creating pollinator habitat in your yard, garden or in a larger landscape simply begins with the establishment of one native plant. We hope that visiting the garden will serve as inspiration to homeowners to create similar habitats, one native plant at a time."

On the day of the event, Legislator Anker was joined by volunteers, including members of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, Pat Loliscio of Pat's Complete Landscaping, the Mount Sinai Garden Club, Girl Scout Troop 3017, Girl Scout Troop 227, Girl Scout Troop 1234, and the Little Scientists. Some of the native species planted

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were flowery plants that provide nectar and pollen; others, such as grasses, provide nesting habitat. Volunteers also listened to a presentation by Legislator Anker and Ms. Weigand about invasive species, native plants, and the necessity of pollinators. Guests were provided with educational pamphlets and posters, as well as a native plant to start their own garden.

"Suffolk County has close to 50,000 acres of open space and thousands of acres of government property. I look forward to working with the county to encourage the use of native Long Island plants in our landscaping," said Legislator Anker. "We must do everything in our power to preserve our native pollinators including the beautiful Monarch Butterfly, and in doing so we will support our local farming community as well as preserve the natural environmental landscape."

For more information about the Educational Agriculture Support Initiative, please call the office of Legislator Anker at (631) 854-1600.

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