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# Brookhaven goes green with native plants at town hall

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Native plant species growing behind Brookhaven Town Hall in Farmingville, seen here on Tuesday, Aug. 15, 2017, are part of an effort to promote a green agenda. Photo Credit: Barry Sloan

Brookhaven Supervisor Edward P. Romaine has long promised to turn the town green.

And in his latest effort, he's taking it literally — planting 50 native plant species in what had been a lawn behind town hall. Planting occurred last year, but the space just started blooming this summer.

“I push for the environment because I believe we all need to be greener,” Romaine said, adding that Brookhaven faces several environmental hurdles, including cleaning up polluted rivers and creeks.

Officials said the drought-resistant plants at Town Hall in Farmingville will save on water costs and reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizer, which will cut down on nitrogen seeping into the groundwater.

Town officials worked with the Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District to decide on a combination of wildflowers and seed mix best suited for planting behind the building. A \$7,000 county grant helped pay for the project, officials said, and plans are underway to expand the planted area.



Suffolk

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Romaine wanted to replace some of the turf grass surrounding town hall with native plants to help ensure rainwater seeping into the ground is clean, while also beautifying town hall property, said Anthony Graves, Brookhaven's chief environmental analyst.

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The colorful field, which has been cordoned off to keep geese from

eating the plants, includes black-eyed Susans, little bluestems, bee balm, wild carrot and purple lupine, Graves said.

The flowers attract wasps, bumblebees, spiders, beetles and butterflies. As the assortment of flowers continues blooming, the field's color will change from the bright orange dominated by the black-eyed Susans.

"It provides color and a variety for the eye," Graves said.

The townwide environmental initiative started a few years ago when Romaine instituted stricter wastewater standards for homes constructed or expanded within 500 feet of a body of water. The project was aimed at reducing nitrogen pollution, which causes algal blooms, some of which are toxic.



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The planted area is just one of several environmental measures undertaken in the town. Earlier this month, Romaine oversaw the completion of a yearlong \$650,000 project to create a fish passage and reconstruct a spillway that allows trout to travel between the Upper Yaphank Lake and the Carmans River for the first time since the 1700s.

Town officials in June launched Brookhaven’s food scrap composting pilot program in which banana peels, apple cores, coffee grounds and other organic waste are collected and composted at town hall.

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“We’re looking to reduce the amount of garbage we throw away. Some of that food waste doesn’t have to be thrown out and can be turned into compost,” Romaine said.

Brookhaven officials earlier this summer invited the public to hear presentations about nonnative pepperweed at West Meadow Beach in Stony Brook.

For the past few years, the town has partnered with the nonprofit Friends of Bellport to put 100,000 oysters in Bellport Bay and has worked to prevent commercial development in Farmingville and the Moriches.

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### Brookhaven's native plants

- Black-eyed Susans: Bright yellow flowers with a dark center
- Little bluestem: A low-growing grass
- Bee balm: Attracts bees and butterflies
- Wild carrot: Is edible when young
- Purple lupine: Can grow up to 5 feet high

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