

STRATHAM,
New
Hampshire

A Wild Community

Planting for animals and people

by Kelsea Daulton

A GARDEN SANCTUARY FOR WILDLIFE and its admirers is in the works on the lands near the Great Bay of New Hampshire. A Community Wildlife Garden is being developed in Stratham along the Squamscott River, and it is due to officially launch on Earth Day 2015. The Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) is creating this as a place for all members of the community to enjoy.

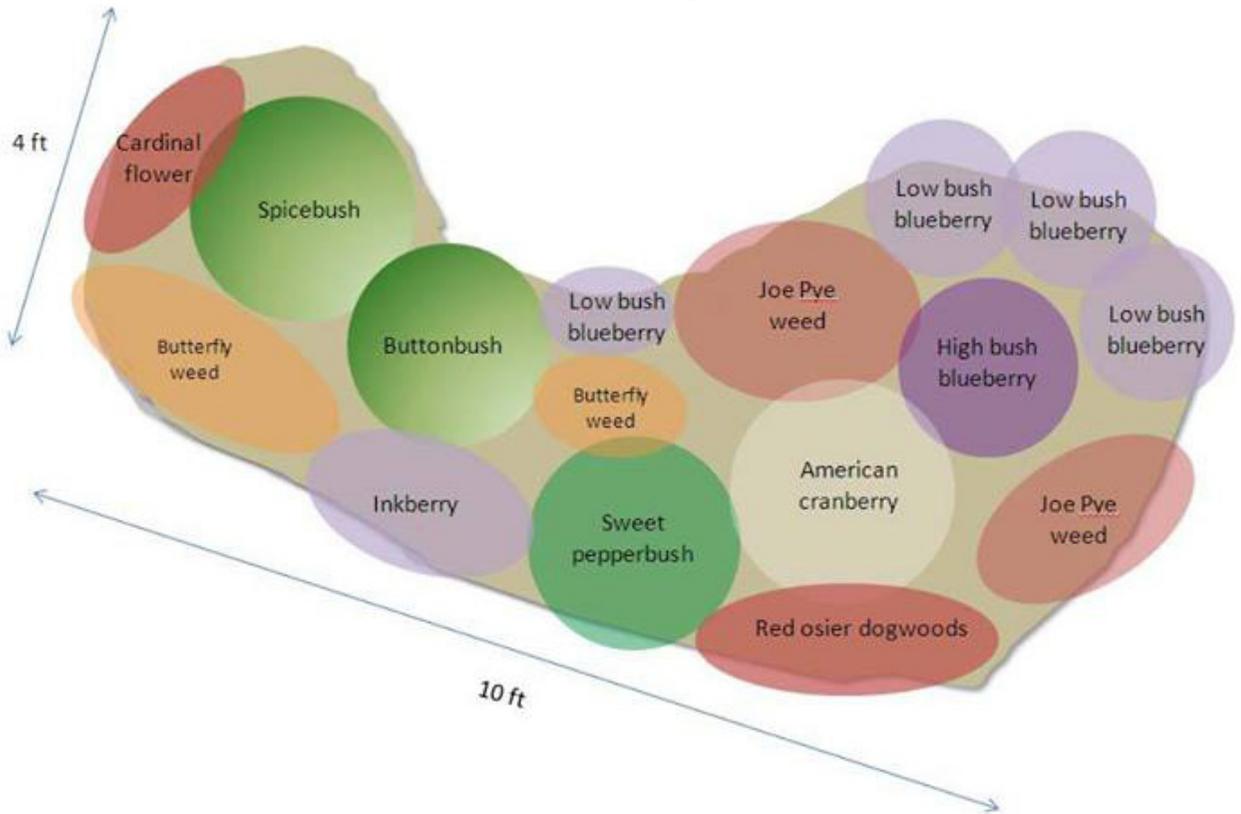
A wildlife garden is specifically designed to attract and protect several species of wildlife. In order for a garden to be considered wildlife friendly, it must be a habitat that provides four essentials: food, water, cover and a place to raise young.

Rachel Stevens is the stewardship coordinator

at the Great Bay NERR. The garden will be “aesthetically pleasing from a gardening perspective, but also provide food, cover and nesting opportunities for wildlife,” she says. The 1.6-acre garden is part of a 12-acre plot already being used as a wildlife-viewing platform overlooking a salt marsh and an osprey nest that was established in the early ’90s. The wildlife garden project focuses on community outreach because over 80 percent of land acres in New Hampshire is privately owned. “If we don’t let people know that [what they] do affects wildlife, we won’t do our job thoroughly,” Stevens explains. “It’s an opportunity to show how to create a wildlife-friendly, fun and beautiful backyard.”

The educational elements of the garden will

The plan for the Community Wildlife Garden's rain garden was finalized using ideas from landscape-design students at the University of New Hampshire.



accommodate people according to their interests. There will be group tours covering a variety of topics. There will undoubtedly be garden tours focusing on plants and school groups focusing on wildlife and phenology (the study of the life cycle of plants and animals and their relationship to changing seasons and climate). Stevens says the approach to education is casual and will include themed programs.

The garden has been in the works since 2011. University of New Hampshire Professor John Hart's landscape design students drew up individual plans for the site in 2012. The best ideas were selected to be used by a landscape architect. The design is ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessible, and it features trails, a rain garden, an arbor replicating Thoreau's cabin and a pond and waterfall powered by the sun. The cabin, the exact dimensions of Thoreau's, will be constructed of timber reclaimed from 18th-century houses.

The inspiration for Thoreau's cabin replica came from the legacy he left behind.

"Thoreau was a real originator of the natural conservation movement in America," says Stevens.

Another defining feature of the garden is its "no-mow" lawn. Creeping thyme and other low-growing greens will be planted instead of traditional grass so the lawn won't have to be continuously mowed. Grape vines will grow up the cabin to provide food for wildlife. Buttonbush and beach plums will provide nesting sites for birds, different species of milkweed will assist all stages of the Monarch butterfly's life and strawberries and sunflowers will also be planted. The rain garden will feature cardinal flower, butterfly weed, inkberry, sweet pepperbush, American cranberry, red osier dogwoods, high- and low-bush blueberries, joe-pye weed and spicebush.

To track the progress of the Community Wildlife Garden, follow their page on Facebook. ☺