

Establishing Pollinator Habitats Organically

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South Killingly, CT
Virginia Keith, Owner

Pollinator Habitat Benefits

“Increased habitat for pollinators will improve fruit set, size and quality, productivity per acre, biodiversity, beneficial insect populations, and the food base for many wildlife species. The increased plant diversity of pollinator habitat will enhance wildlife habitat and may increase populations of other beneficial insects, reducing the need for pesticides.” NRCS.

Blueberry Hill Organic Farm has observed significant improvement in fruit set, size and quality, as well as a noticeable reduction in pest populations since the establishment of pollinator plantings at the farm.

Two pollinator habitats were planted in 2013 using an Earthway Seeder, planting 2' rows and mulching with straw. This planting had a high rate of germination and establishment. By the second year the majority of species in the mix had germinated successfully and produced a mature growth habit with full bloom. Another habitat was planted in 2016 using a broadcast spreader and no mulch applied. The broadcast planting was dominated with primarily Coreopsis and did not have the plant diversity of the row-method plantings.

Blueberry Hill Organic Farm .2 acre Pollinator Planting Budget; \$288/.2 acre

Grant Reimbursement Funds Provided by NRCS, EQUIP Grant; \$585/acre

Seeds; Northeastern Pollinator mix with Wild Lupine

Ernst Seeds; Xerces Northeastern Pollinator Conservation Seed Mix \$81.90/lb,
recommended rate of 8lbs/acre

Eden Brothers; Wild Perennial Lupine Seed \$19.95/1/4 lb, recommended rate of 1 lb/acre

Seeder; Nolts Produce Supplies; Earthway Seeder \$87.00

Mulch; Straw; \$7/bale, 10 bales

1 lb of the Pollinator seed, ¼ lb of the Lupine Seed, approximately 10 bales of straw was used for .2 acres, requiring approximately 4 hours of labor

Pollinator Habitat; 2' – Row Planting Procedures;

Contacted;

NRCS and applied for EQUIP grant to include Pollinator Habitat Planting

Purchased;

-Xerces Society Northeastern Pollinator Conservation Seed from Ernst Conservation Seed Co., www.ernstseed.com or 800-873-3321

-Wild Perennial Lupine seed from Eden Brothers, www.edenbrothers.com
828-633-6338

-Earthway Seeder from Nolts Produce Supplies; www.noltsproducesupplies.net, 717-656-9764

Preparation;

-Scarified Lupine seed with plastic jar and sand paper and added to Pollinator seed mix

-Turned soil with Troybilt tiller

-Raked out large clumps, rocks

Planting , Mulch, Care;

-Seeded in late April/early May using Earthway seeder and cucumber or popcorn plate, rows at 2' apart, approximately ¼ " deep

-Seeded just before rain

-Mulched with straw between rows

-Watered as needed to establish

-Mowed 1/3 in late fall

Notes; Soil pH was approximately 5.8, second and third year pollinator planting provided constant bloom from late May through late October

Pollinator Habitat; Broadcast Planting Method

Turned the soil with tractor and rotovator

Hand broadcast the Xerces Northeastern Pollinator Mix at a rate of approximately 1 lb per acre before a rainfall. Did not follow up with mulch or watering.