

# Pollinator Garden at the Parker River NWR Visitors Center

Bill Gette-

President Friends of Parker River NWR

When the refuge Visitors Center was built on the Plum Island Turnpike, construction plans included a large garden landscaped with native herbaceous perennials, shrubs, and trees. Within the garden, workers placed large decorative boulders that created a center circle where visitors could relax and enjoy the area. The garden not only provided a welcoming landscape at the entrance to the Center, but also provided opportunities to educate visitors about native plants.

With time, the refuge staff undertook many new projects not only at Parker River but also at the other refuges they managed, including Great Bay in New Hampshire and Thatcher Island off Cape Ann. Garden maintenance became a lesser priority, and over the years, invasive plants and weeds overwhelmed the garden.

Recently, the Friends of Parker River assumed responsibility for removing the invasive plants and restoring the area as a pollinator garden, for the benefit of our extremely important insects, birds, and visitors.



Friends volunteers Lorene Melvin, Teri Contino, and Lynette Leka have taken the leadership role in this very visible and important project. Refuge maintenance staff has been extremely helpful by using heavy equipment to remove large invasive shrubs, especially honeysuckle.

As volunteers and staff cleared the invasive plants, they were thrilled to see that some of the original flowering shrubs and berry-bearing plants had survived. This discovery was an important motivator to work even harder to bring back the garden to its former beauty.

Currently, garden plots are being reestablished, perennials (funded by the Friends and donated by gardeners) are being planted, and the endless tasks of weeding, watering, and mulching are becoming routine. The Friends invite you to visit the garden: smell the flowers, look for butterflies and other amazing insects, take a deep breath and relax.