

Alton initiative helps pollinators

The Alton Village Association (AVA), with the help and support from the Town of Caledon, is creating a Butterflyway Garden on the Alton Fire Station lands.

Volunteers are on a mission to build, maintain and promote a network of community gardens, that will meet the objectives of the AVA, David Suzuki Foundation ButterflyWay and the Town of Caledon's Resilient Caledon Climate Change Action Plan.

This year, a ButterflyWay garden is being built by the gardeners, with the help of the Town of Caledon, at the Alton Fire Station 301, 19630 Main St. It's the first AVA initiated garden, outside of the Alton Village Square.

There are so many benefits for our community to build these gardens. Some are listed in the "Discovery Guide" booklet published by AVA, as well as on their website, where they have many links and resources.

The ButterflyWay Garden at the Alton Fire Station was made possible with a grant from the Town of Caledon, the "Climate Action Fund" in 2026. Staff at the Town have been wonderful with their help and support.

The garden design is based on a matrix of native grass, with swaths of flowering native plants that blossom at different times throughout the season.

Here is a list of the native plants that have been planted.:

Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*). Foxglove Beard Tongue (*Penstemon digitalis*). Lanceleaf Coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*). Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*). Stiff Goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*). Dense Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*). New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*).

Due to concerns over juglone sensitivity, close to a black walnut tree, they used Prairie Smoke (*Geum triflorum*) instead of the Columbine (*Aquilegia*) that had been originally planned.

Black walnut trees are often seen as a problem in gardens, however, many of Ontario's native plants have evolved to tolerate juglone and will grow quite well near them. An informative article, by a local Alton native nursery.

The AVA purchased the plants for this ButterflyWay Garden from three different nurseries. It is important, when building these gardens, to ensure the plants are keystone species for pollinators and therefore true natives, are free of pesticides and contribute to healthy, native habitats to support bees, birds and butterflies.

The three native plant nurseries are In Our Nature, Alton; 2. Ontario Native Plants, Flamborough, and Origin Native Plants, Guelph.

AVA now has two ButterflyWay Gardens in the Alton Village Square and this new garden, when completed at the fire station will be a third, but there are also residents and businesses who have added ButterflyWay Gardens to their landscapes. The Alton Village Butterfly Gardens are part of a greater network of native plant gardens in Caledon, the Caledon ButterflyWay Project.

Across Canada, over 7,400 habitat gardens and 139 official David Suzuki Foundation Butterflyways have been established.

"Together we are making a difference for pollinators and contributing to the good health of life on our planet," AVA says.