Final Report: Pollinator Hotels

Approximately three-quarters of wild flowering plants rely on insects, like solitary bees, to move pollen among individuals so that the plants can reproduce. This has important implications for our dinner plates: it has been estimated that one out of every three bites of food we eat would not have been produced without an insect pollinator’s assistance. Pollination is big business too! Insects provide billions of dollars worth of pollination services to agricultural crops each year.

The Fernald Club is UMass Amherst’s graduate entomology organization; two of our goals are to promote insect conservation and to educate the public about insects. Thanks to a grant from the UMass Sustainability Fund, the Fernald Club was able to install three pollinator hotels on campus to provide nesting habitat for native pollinators and educate the campus community about the importance of insect pollinators. We designed and installed a large pollinator hotel in the Franklin Permaculture Garden and two smaller hotels in the Berkshire Permaculture Garden. Each pollinator hotel contains nesting cavities designed for solitary bees and is accompanied by an informative sign, which explains what the hotel is and provides information about pollination. To stimulate visual interest of passersby, we commissioned illustrations of two potential hotel occupants, a leaf-cutter bee and a mason bee, from a local artist. We worked with the talented UMass Sign Shop to produce the signs. Please visit the Fernald Club’s website, www.fernaldclub.org for more information about the pollinator hotels.

Photo Captions (by file name):
Franklin1: The large pollinator hotel and its informative sign in the Franklin Permaculture Garden. Photo by Laura Doubleday.
Franklin2: Close-up of the large pollinator hotel in the Franklin Permaculture Garden. Photo by Laura Doubleday.

Franklin3: Close-up of a nesting block in a pollinator hotel. Photo by Laura Doubleday.
Berkshire1: One of the small pollinator hotels in the Berkshire Permaculture Garden. Photo by Laura Doubleday.

Berkshire2: Members of the Fernald Club (L to R: Sara June Connon, Jonathan Giacomini, and Scott Schneider) working on one of the small pollinator hotels in the Berkshire Permaculture Garden. Photo by Laura Doubleday.
Franklin4: Members of the Fernald Club (L to R: Jonathan Giacomini, Sara June Connon, Evan Palmer-Young, Daniel Peterson, Scott Schneider, and Laura Doubleday) after installing a pollinator hotel sign at the Franklin Permaculture Garden. Photo by Becky Walton.