



## A Garden Grows Joy

### Natives, Pollinators, and the Human Heart

By Kimberly Failon, [Henrico County, VA](#) Master Gardener Volunteer, Pollinator Steward Certified, [HMGA](#) Member, & Joy Conjurer

“If you build it, they will come.” This phrase from the classic Kevin Costner movie “Field of Dreams” is spoken by a ghost appealing to Kevin Costner’s character, telling him to build a baseball field in his cornfield, where legendary baseball players come to play, a notion that creating something valuable or appealing will naturally attract people.

After many years of walking past a balding, weedy field, not a cornfield per se, Kim started to wonder, “Why hasn’t the neighborhood done anything there?” The unkempt area got all



of Kim’s gardening cylinders firing. It was a spot where perhaps a tree or two had been taken down. Nothing had gone up in its place, but that clearly was years ago.

In 2021, Kim received her Henrico County (Virginia) Master Gardeners volunteer certificate through the Henrico Co-op Extension program and with this education, gained a new-found interest in pollinator gardens. She did regular maintenance work at a local county pollinator garden and learned from a seasoned and expert Master Gardener and Master Naturalist, best known as the “pied piper” for butterflies and the local authority on pollinators. Through these experiences, Kim expanded her knowledge and decided to pursue her [Pollinator Steward Certification](#) (PSC) through

Pollinator Partnership, securing that designation in 2024. The PSC program opened up a new world of opportunities in supporting pollinators from how they live and thrive to how individuals can help to create habitats for them in many landscapes including parks, rights of ways, urban gardens and farms, to name a few.

Kim admits that some of her best ideas come from her walks. Building a garden in a seemingly desolate spot of land – why not? She had walked past a certain site in her neighborhood for several years, and yet, there seemed to be *no action* to improve the spot. Kim contacted the Home Owners Association (HOA) President to find out if there was any reason why nothing had been done. The President was supportive of the idea of a garden and said that as far as he knew it was a place where a dead tree had been taken down.

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In February 2024, Kim gathered her master gardener friends to pitch her idea. They wanted to move forward in proposing the idea of a pollinator garden to the HOA Board. Kim decided she needed a co-chair to help move this project forward. She tapped neighborhood resident Dave McGee, a Master Gardener, who had a conscientious, calmer approach to her mercurial ways. With Dave's help, the Henrico County Cooperative Extension recognized the project as a pilot project with the Henrico County master gardeners; as approved, the County agreed to a unique collaboration between a private



property/community and assistance by the master gardeners for one year in the form of maintenance and education. By August 2024, Dave and Kim had secured most of the funding for the garden. Kim worked with [Earth Love Gardens, LLC](#) to draw an official landscape map and select plants for the space. Through private donations and local grant money, the Fox Hall Pollinator Garden became a reality on May 20, 2025, serendipitously on World Bee Day. Henrico Master Gardeners and the Fox Hall community came together and installed more than 150 plants in the footprint that had been put in place a few weeks prior by [Brooks Elite Landscapes](#).

What is so special about this small (1,000 square foot) garden? Here are a few tangibles:

**Community:** It took a village to build it. It brought together so many entities and continues to do so. **Goodness for the environment:** Bringing 85% Virginia native plants to a space for pollinators is good for everyone – providing food and shelter for pollinators like bees and butterflies is critical for plant reproduction and food production. Further, it beautifies the neighborhood while increasing native biodiversity. **Pollinators:** In our first year, we had Eastern Swallowtails and Monarchs, as well as all sorts of bees, flies, beetles, etc. We also had many monarch caterpillars. **Birds:** Resident mockingbirds seem to lord over the garden, and mourning doves plant themselves firmly in the birdbath each morning.

Why did Kim do it? Yes, it is good for the environment, but the real dividend is to see the wonder it brings to the face of any human, young or old. Kim looks forward to the second spring/summer season of the garden to see what will really pop! Right now, it is buried under snow and ice just waiting to burst forth for its second glorious birthday.

Kim has received much more joy from watching her neighbors' delight in the garden. Build it. They will come. Yes, they will! Both pollinators and humans! Be prepared for the joy it will bring to all.

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## Additional Pictures of the Garden This Season

Pollinators:



Some more of the matured garden from different angles with the donated [Butterfly Bench](#):



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