Securing the Supply of Rhode Island Ecotypic Plants

How PICN members support the efforts of ReSeeding RI

RI Natural History Survey houses the seed refrigerator and provides a meeting space for ReSeeding RI.

ReSeeding RI donated seed to **Peace and Plenty Community Garden** and advised gardeners on how to grow these plants to complement the community vegetable production in an urban green space.

URI Bee Lab provides ReSeeding RI with information on plants that are important to RI's native bees.

Ecotype plants are grown from historically local native plant populations in an ecoregion. These plants are locally adapted and uniquely suited to the biotic and abiotic environments of their particular region.

ReSeeding RI

ReSeeding RI is a program of the RI Wild Plant Society which aims to establish a native, ecotypic seed source in Rhode Island. In 2025, ReSeeding RI harvested its second batch of locally adapted ecotype seed from its foundation plots located around the state. The seed is being used at the RIWPS Seed Starter operations, in educational workshops, and is available for the home gardener, commercial growers or land managers at *northeastseedcollective.com*

Foundation Plots contain approximately 200 plants of a particular species grown from seed that was ethically and sustainably collected from local wild plant populations. These plants are nurtured by partner organizations and the harvested seed can then enter the plant supply chain.

Ocean Hour Farm hosts the Joe Pye weed foundation seed plot and agreed to host a new boneset plot!

RI Audubon hosts three foundation seed plots at its Maxwell Mays site, and hosted the 2025 Transforming the Landscape Symposium at which ReSeeding RI sold seeds to the community.

Westerly Land Trust hosts two foundation plots and has agreed to add a third for downy goldenrod!

Eastern RI Conservation District's Portsmouth AgInnovation property is home to the RIWPS's Seed Starters East!

South Kingstown Land Trust's Hollis Tucker Farm is the new site of RIWPS's Seed Starters West!

Biota of Rhode Island Index System

The second Biota Of Rhode Island Index System (BORIIS2) is a relational database that serves as a guide to evidence about the animals, plants, and other living organisms— the biota—of Rhode Island and its environs. The BORIIS2 project is conceived, organized, and carried out by the Rhode Island Natural History Survey.
At this time, BORIIS2 is in a prototype form, with limited features, available only to Survey staff. The future vision is for security-tiered access by agency personnel, other nonprofit staff, students, researchers, and the public.
Additional funding is needed to achieve this vision.
If you are in a position to help fund additional development of BORIIS2, please contact the Survey Director, David Gregg: dgregg@rinhs.org

Rhode Island State of the Pollinators Report 2025 - 2026

The Plant Insect Community Network is a program of the Rhode Island Natural History Survey created in 2024 with a generous grant from the One Hive Foundation.

One Hive Foundation

RHODE ISLAND NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY
Ecosystem Resilience Through Biodiversity

15 Minute Field Trips
Audubon Society of Rhode Island
Bonoan Lab at Providence College
Congress of the Birds
Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District
Ocean Hour Farm
Peace and Plenty Community Garden
Rhode Island DEM Pollinator Atlas
Rhode Island Natural History Survey
Rhode Island Wild Plant Society
Roger Williams Park Zoo
Roger Williams University
South Kingstown Land Trust
University of Rhode Island Bee Lab
University of Rhode Island Biocontrol Lab
University of Rhode Island Master Gardener Program
University of Rhode Island Preisser Lab
Waters Lab at Providence College
Westerly Land Trust

To learn more about the RI Plant Insect Community Network, visit picn.rinhs.org

RHODE ISLAND PLANT INSECT COMMUNITY NETWORK

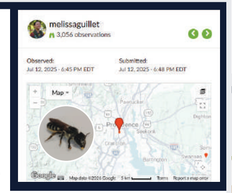
Rhode Island Pollinator Projects

Assembling a Checklist of the Bees of Rhode Island

What is a state record?
A state record is a species that has never been recorded in the state prior to this occurrence!

The URI Bee Lab is developing a checklist of the bees of Rhode Island to provide baseline data on the bee fauna in the state. They have compiled records from historical and modern insect collections, online databases, and iNaturalist, a community science platform. The Bee Lab has also been conducting targeted surveys for species that are likely to occur in the state, but have remained undetected thus far. In 2025, they documented four new state records, and numerous county records for multiple bee species. Through these efforts, they have confirmed ***285 bee species in Rhode Island,*** up from 183 species known in 2016!

Peace & Plenty Community Garden BioBlitz



In 2025, 15 Minute Field Trips ran three mini Bioblitzes with Peace and Plenty Community Garden. Researchers, naturalists, community partners, and neighbors gathered at the 0.39 acre urban community garden located in Providence, RI. Over the course of the 3 mini Bioblitzes, they identified 340 total species! They documented 22 bee and wasp species, including four species of note: the Northern Golden Bumblebee (*Bombus fervidus*), the tomatillo specialist Broad-footed Cellophane Bee (*Colletes latitarsis*), the squash-dependent Pruinose Squash Bee (*Xenoglossa pruinosa*), and the Pugnacious Leafcutter Bee (*Megachile pugnata*) that specializes on sunflowers and other asters. This was ***the first and only time*** the Pugnacious Leafcutter Bee has been recorded in Rhode Island!

You can watch a highlight video created by 15 Minute Field Trips: *youtu.be/NZ4ECA5fsYk*

Rhode Island State Wildlife Action Plan

PICN members coordinated to add 23 bee species to the State Wildlife Action Plan, with seven being designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and 16 as Assessment Priority. This nomination provides greater opportunity for funding to survey, monitor, and conduct various conservation projects relating to these at-risk species.

View the 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan here: *dem.ri.gov/riswap*

Cranberry Specialist Bee (*Melitta americana*)

PICN members at URI conducted research on the pollinators of American cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*) in Rhode Island in the summers of 2024 and 2025. This is the first time cranberry pollinators have been extensively surveyed in the state. *Melitta americana*, also known as the eastern cranberry bee, was ***discovered for the first time in RI*** during this study. A total of 35 *M. americana* were found during these two years, and they were present in every site sampled, including wild bogs around the state.

PHOTO BY MOLLY JACOBSON, FROM INATURALIST, CC BY-NC LICENSE. CONTACT INFORMATION: MMJACOBS@RISF.EDU

What is a specialist bee?
A specialist bee only collects pollen from a certain plant family, related genera, or plant species!

RIDEM Pollinator Atlas

THE RHODE ISLAND BUMBLE BEE SURVEY REPORT

The Rhode Island Bumble Bee Survey (2022 to 2025) was a volunteer-led statewide survey of Rhode Island's bumble bee and eastern carpenter bee populations coordinated by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Division of Fish and Wildlife. Over the course of the project, 46 volunteers surveyed 67 sites, representing all five counties and 37 of Rhode Island's 39 towns. Over ***6,000 bees of at least seven species*** were observed!

THE RHODE ISLAND WILD BEE SURVEY

The RI Wild Bee Survey (2023 to 2025) was a statewide survey of Rhode Island's solitary, small eusocial, and small communal bee species. Volunteers helped the RIDEM Pollinator Atlas Entomologist collect over 2,000 bee specimens. Through this work, at least ***two new state records*** were found! The data from this project has been shared with the URI Bee Lab for inclusion in the Rhode Island Bee Checklist.

Pollinator-Focused Field Trips and Community Seed Sourcing Efforts in Westerly

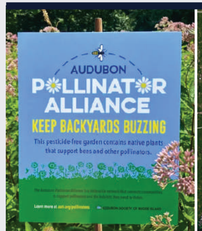
Highlighting the importance of pollinator biodiversity to overall ecosystem health, the Westerly Land Trust (WLT) continued to offer a diversity of pollinator education programming, including the annual Preserve Pollinators field trip, where kids of all grade levels visit a WLT preserve to ***catch, identify, appreciate, and safely release*** a variety of pollinators.

Throughout the summer, WLT also harvested ecotypic heal-all (*Prunella vulgaris var. lanceolata*) seeds from its ReSeeding RI Foundation Plot. Some of these seeds will be used to study long-tongued bee behavior while others will find their way into backyards and WLT conserved spaces.

Providence College Bonoan Lab's 4th Annual WLT Pollinator Safari

For the fourth year, the Bonoan Lab at Providence College led a led a pollinator safari on Westerly Land Trust property. This year, they led the safari on the Barlow Nature Preserve as part of the summer Farm Squad program. They were joined by twenty 5-10 year-old nature enthusiasts in search of flower-visiting insects. They observed nearly ***20 species of flower-visiting insects***, all within less than a mile walk around the preserve! Some favorites were: squash bees, a monarch butterfly, and a green June beetle.

For a full list of species, visit: *providencepollinators.com/2025/07/25/fourth-annual-pollinator-safari/*



The Audubon Pollinator Alliance Connecting the Community

The RI Audubon Pollinator Alliance is focused on connecting neighbors and communities with pollinator gardens to form a state-wide network that supports bees, birds, butterflies, and other pollinators. Schools, libraries, businesses, and individuals can take the Pesticide-Free Pledge and register their green spaces on the map! Since its launch in 2024, more than 125 green spaces have registered totalling ***3,218,585 square feet of pollinator-friendly habitat*** throughout Rhode Island! To learn more or register your garden on the map, visit: *asri.org/pollinators/alliance.html*

University of Rhode Island Master Gardener Program

URI Master Gardeners delivered the "*Rhode Island's Native Bees: Best Gardening Practices for Pollinators*" presentation five times in 2025, reaching ***82 attendees across five towns***. This presentation was developed in partnership with the URI Bee Lab. The URIMGP also supported multiple demonstration gardens centered around pollinators and native plants, including a new garden meant to provide shelter and food for birds at Congress of the Birds in Providence.

Other new projects in 2025 included The People's Garden at Wanskuck Library in Providence, where Master Gardener volunteers helped replace existing sod with scores of native plants. In addition, the URIMGP School Garden Mentor program continued assisting K–12 schools with several gardens, such as those in East Greenwich and across the Chariho school district, focusing on native plants and pollinator education.

IPM Support For Pollinator Health

For over 40 years, URI has received funds from the USDA to conduct an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program for Rhode Island farmers. In 2025, the URI IPM programming added a new program: ***IPM Support for Pollinator Health***. The URI Biocontrol Lab is utilizing available resources from the URI Bee Lab to provide growers with guidelines on pollinator identification, pollinator-friendly plant recommendations, and pollinator-friendly pest management practices. With the support of staff and a summer pollinator intern, the URI Biocontrol Lab will make this information available to growers and gardeners throughout the Community IPM and Specialty Crops IPM programs.

Creating a Bird-Friendly Pollinator Garden

This year, the URI Master Gardeners teamed up with Congress of the Birds, Rhode Island's only avian rehabilitation center, to create a four-season bird garden. This space feeds not only pollinating insects, but also birds on their migratory journeys and throughout the winter. In the clinic at Congress of the Birds, juvenile cedar waxwings, red-eyed vireos, and Baltimore orioles got to ***snack on elderberries harvested from that very bird garden!*** This gives the baby birds the chance to forage from real branches and helps them build the skills they will need once they return to the wild.

Expanding Pollinator Habitat in South Kingstown

The South Kingstown Land Trust (SKLT), in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), has expanded pollinator habitat at Weeden Farm to support native bee populations and broader ecosystem health. The URI Bee Lab monitored the initial half-acre planting, established in 2017, and documented ***over 50 species of bees*** from 2023 to 2025. Building on this success, SKLT planted an additional two acres in fall 2025 where grassland and semi-forested habitats intersect. The site also supports over 16 bluebird boxes and is accessible through SKLT's gator tours, expanding community engagement with pollinator conservation.

Spread Your Wings Pledge Program

In 2025, Roger Williams Park Zoo launched Spread Your Wings, a new program designed to promote native plantings while gathering insights on how to make these resources more accessible to the community. During pilot events at the Zoo and Roger Williams Park, ***200 plants were distributed and 18 pledges secured***, with participants committing to take conservation action through the pledge.

Building on this success, the program officially launched in September, distributing additional plants, capturing 14 more pledges, and providing pledgees with themed goody bags and quarterly follow-up emails to track engagement and long-term impact. Early feedback shows that participants are most interested in resources for accessing native plants locally and at low cost, which will guide our next steps. Ongoing surveys and new plant propagation will sustain momentum with three 2026 events scheduled to expand community impact. RWPZ is hopeful to join forces with fellow AZA-accredited zoos across the country to be able to map the impact on a larger scale.

Student Planting for Pollinators

The Eastern RI Conservation District and RIWPS collaborated on a new native shrub planting in October 2025 at Portsmouth AgInnovation in an effort to reclaim pollinator habitat from encroaching invasive species. The task was simultaneously used as an educational experience for Portsmouth and Middletown middle school students who assisted with the planting over 5 after-school sessions. The kids helped roll up the tarps used for occultation prior to planting, removed dead debris, and ***planted about 200 plugs total***. Students learned about the importance of native flowers for pollinators and how these plants offer resources, such as pollen and nectar, to a variety of beneficial insects. The plugs were grown for the RIWPS ReSeeding RI initiative that aims to increase accessibility to RI ecotype plants.

Regenerative Landscaping Working Series at Ocean Hour Farm

In collaboration with the Rhode Island Nursery & Landscaping Association, Ocean Hour Farm hosted a three-part workshop series that brought together 125 landscapers to learn about and discuss regenerative land care. The goal is to equip professionals with sustainable skills in ecological landscape design, land and sea biological amendments, and native meadow installation and management – ***all of which benefit pollinators***. Each workshop featured an industry expert, a farm-to-table dinner, and hands-on demonstrations.