

Guiding Framework: Creating Healthy Pollinator Habitat at State Facilities

The **Leading By Example Program** works collaboratively with state agencies and public colleges and universities to advance clean energy and sustainable practices that reduce the environmental impacts of state government operations.

This guiding framework outlines strategies that MA state facilities can implement to support pollinator habitat on state lands. These strategies provide environmental and fiscal benefits and lead to more diverse, resilient, and beautiful landscapes.

Strategies for Implementation

LIMITED MOW ZONES

Reducing the number of annual mows on underutilized grassy areas is the easiest, least costly way to create habitat. Limited mow zones are typically mowed once per year in the late fall or early spring. Mowing along edges and adding signs indicates intent and increases public awareness and support.

Some state entities implementing this strategy: Bristol & Massasoit Community Colleges, DCR, UMass Lowell

MANAGED MEADOWS & GRASSLANDS

In areas of unused lawn or where a more interesting and colorful landscape is desired, wildflower meadows can be created by preparing and seeding a targeted area. Seed mixes should be made from a diversity of native flowers and grasses that bloom throughout the growing season.

Some state entities implementing this strategy include: DCR, MassDOT, MassWildlife, UMass Lowell

POLLINATOR GARDEN

Small gardens featuring native perennials that bloom throughout the growing season are great for pollinators and for enhancing public places. Rocks, woody debris, and water sources can be incorporated to provide additional habitat. Educational signage related to pollinators and habitat can be used to enhance the project and raise awareness.

Some state entities implementing this strategy: DCR, MassArt, Berkshire Community College, UMass Amherst

For more information, please visit the **Leading By Example** website:
<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/leading-by-example>

Pollinator Habitat Benefits

Ecosystem Services

Reduce fuel use & associated emissions; sequester carbon

Increase resilience to flooding by improving water uptake and infiltration

Increase food and habitat for wildlife that depend on insects and seeds

Operational

Reduce mowing and staff time, improving staff efficiencies

Reduce need for irrigation, fertilizer, and pesticide

Reduce overall fuel and maintenance costs

Well-being

Encourage greater connection to nature; improve aesthetics



MASSACHUSETTS
**DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY RESOURCES**

Guiding Framework: Pollinator Habitat Best Management Practices

The table below provides some suggested best practices to create and manage pollinator meadows and grasslands.

Step	Description
1) Site Preparation	The simplest way to initiate new pollinator habitats is to stop mowing an area or portion of an area. If seeding or planting is desired, preparation will vary by site, but will typically involve removal of existing lawn via tilling, overlaying a tarp over a section of lawn for an extended period, or using approved herbicides through a certified applicator ¹ . Some sites may require soil amendments or establishing a preferred grade as determined by site staff or consultants.
2) Seed/Plant Selection	Designated habitat areas may be planted with seeds and/or live plants. In both cases, species should be selected that are as regionally native as possible (e.g., native to the county, state, or region). The Pollinator Seed Checklist offers guidance on species selection. If planting live plants, select a diverse mix. Email DOER at morgan.bowler@mass.gov to receive a copy of the Pollinator Seed Checklist. Where possible, several plants of the same species should be planted in groups of five or more to better attract native pollinating insects.
3) Planting Timing	The optimal timeframe for sowing seed mixes is typically early spring or late fall.
4) Mulch	Newly planted gardens and seeded meadows may require mulch to retain moisture and protect seeds until vegetation establishes. Leaf mulch or straw mulch should be used for perennials. Seed mixes are typically hydro-mulched.
5) Watering	After seeding, meadows do not typically require watering unless conditions are very dry. Mowing may be required for weed control during establishment (first 2-3 years). Areas should be mowed prior to weed species going to seed; see mowing best practices in the following section.
6) Weeding	Once established, perennial plantings don't require watering, but will require weed management during the first 2-3 years until seeded species plants are more densely established. After that, weeding will be minimal, but likely still required. Frequency will depend on weather, surrounding weeds, and other site conditions.
7) Protection and Education	Fencing may be used to prevent foot traffic. Signage can help to convey the intent and importance of the planting. Signage should inform staff and visitors that a naturalized look is expected and why it is beneficial to pollinators and native wildlife. State facilities may adopt or modify "Growing Wild for Pollinators" signs found on the LBE Sustainable Landscaping website .

