

New Philadelphia pollinator plot

“establishing really well”

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BARRY, Ill. — A progress report gives high marks to the pollinator plot at New Philadelphia.

“Everything’s establishing really well with pretty good diversity — high diversity is what I would say,” said Jacob Whitehall, a soil conservationist with the Pike County Natural Resources Conservation Service. “The type of plants is very diverse. There’s a pretty good number of plants as well.”

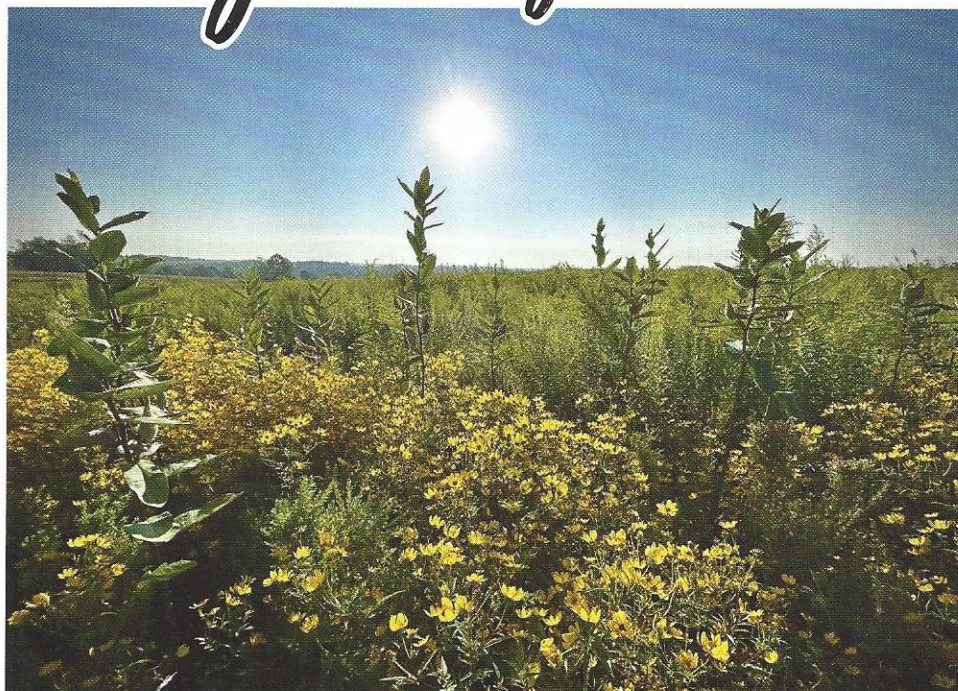
A butterfly garden planted in 2021 and a two-acre pollinator plot added in 2022 are among the latest projects at New Philadelphia, the first town in the U.S. platted and legally registered by an African American, Free Frank McWorter, in 1836 — and since December, one of the country’s newest national parks.

The idea for the pollinator projects came from New Philadelphia Association President Phil Bradshaw as a way to enhance the site near Barry, and David Iftner, a board member of the association who studies butterflies in the U.S. and the Caribbean, helped make it happen.

“The plot itself was set up to give people an idea of the type of vegetation that Free Frank or people who settled the prairie would have encountered,” Iftner said in 2022.

Iftner worked with Vicki Morrical, a NRCS landscape architect, on selecting the 40-plus seeds, grasses and forbs for the pollinator plot, located about one-quarter mile up the road from the butterfly garden at the site’s kiosk.

Additional help in establishing the plot came from the Pike-Scott Farm Bureau Young Leaders and Pike County Quail and Upland Management Association.



Forbs bloom between other plants in the New Philadelphia pollinator plot. The plot, planted in 2022, offers a wide range of plants designed to support pollinators from butterflies to bees. Photo by Jacob Whitehall

“It usually takes roughly three years to establish a pollinator planting,” Whitehall said. “It just takes time for them to come up in the soil bed and basically germinate.”

Investing time in a pollinator plot pays off with big dividends.

Plots support “all the pollinators from butterflies and beetles to flies, wasps and even moths, including birds and all the way up to deer and other things that just enjoy the browse they offer,” Whitehall said.

Plots spread across the Midwest are vital to maintain healthy, diverse pollinators during seasonal migration.

“Without these pollinators, we won’t have the success we’ve seen in the Midwest,” Whitehall said. “The more diversity you have, the more successful cropland is.”

Landowners hoping to establish a pollinator plot need patience — except with invasive species that need to be removed quickly — and ideally a site away from crop

fields to avoid herbicides and insecticides.

Whitehall said the number of plots is growing “like wildfire” across the county, and NRCS can provide help to people wanting to plant.

Plots are planted with seed, rather than transplants, to boost the success rate. Popular choices include forbs, or plants that flower, like showy goldenrod, wild bergamot, purple prairie clover, swamp milkweed and tall field thistle.

“Some other ones I see are ironweed, prairie blazing star — that one’s a really hard one to grow but it’s a really cool plant — and common milkweed,” Whitehall said.

“If you are going to do a pollinator planting, have a diversity of early bloomers, middle blooming and late blooming plants,” he said. “There’s a lot of different things that migrate from north to south. Having a diverse bloom period would allow you to see stuff throughout the year.”