

# Pollinators Paradise Project

We're creating a "pollinator highway" of native plants that will provide food and shelter for pollinators across the city

Monday, November 2, 2015

## Spreading Wildflowers: A chat with Miriam Goldberger



Miriam Goldberger has been at it for decades. Her 100 acres Coldwater, Ontario-based wildflower farm is the largest in Canada, selling native seeds (since 1988). She is also a writer and the author of [Taming Wildflowers](#), a wonderful resource for newbies who want to start a native species patch or meadow.

Miriam has always had an interest for growing things from seed—and also a long-term fascination with birth, midwifery, family and regeneration.

She tells me she got into wildflowers when she started looking for low maintenance plants for the beds around her property, so it was “a back door way to learn about native flowers. Also, they made brilliant cut flowers.”

To the term “taming” and why she uses it in the title of her book, Miriam says taming is really a combination of irony (“Why would you want to?”) and the fact that it is possible to work with them and harness their power to

provide benefits for people and creatures. She believes that wildflower are beautiful all around, for meadows, container gardening, weddings and other “pollination partnerships.”

“Current research points to the importance of wildflowers in terms of food agriculture farming and landscape,” Miriam says.

“Studies show that pollinators positively inform the yield of food crops and quality of the food grown. Beneficial insects reduce the need for insecticides by 60 to 80 percent.”

### Why Meadows?

Meadows create a diverse eco-system, which is what pollinators and beneficial insects thrive on, providing nectar and pollen at every single juncture in the seasons. Miriam points to the diversity of services meadows provide including shelter, plants that nurture the egg, the young insect and the mature alike. “In a meadow, you have the food sources that you need. They are sustainable, cost efficient, low maintenance and long-lived. Many compelling reasons why meadows are important,” Miriam enthuses.

Working with Municipalities, conservation authorities and developers.

Over the years, **Wildflower Farm** has worked very closely with a number of conservation authorities and municipalities throughout North America on a variety of projects, advising on species selection, supplying seeds.

One sustainable wildflower subdivision project they've worked (consulting and supplying seeds) is Westminster Woods in Guelph where meadows were successfully utilized in place of a detention basin pond.

Wildflower Farm has worked closely with Ontario organizations such as the TRCA, Halton Region and the city of Barrie.

They are often called upon to supply specifications for public and private projects to garden and building architects. Stakeholders and planners contact them for their expertise in native plants, sustainable landscaping and seed quality. They are also the official supplier for milkweed for the Suzuki Foundation.

If you're a group partnering with a municipality, Miriam advises that you aim to work closely with the correct divisions: for example, work with the division doing the salting in the winter because salt kills plants. “The way to solve this, is to learn specifically which equipment is being utilized and place it in a safe location, figure out how far the spray goes etc.”

### Other tips on growing wildflowers

Use the **website**. Plants continue to grow all through the fall, after the first frost and throughout the winter. Miriam urges us to grow flowers from seeds.

“They are hardy, resourceful seeds. It's the best way to have seeds, because most of the time, you will not find them commercially. Our seeds are all grown here on our farm.”