Project title: **Library Landscape Pollinator and Native Species Garden Phase II**
Team members: Julie Newton, Laura Akerman, and the Emory Libraries Environmental Sustainability Committee
Amount awarded: $567.88 Amount spent: $555.96

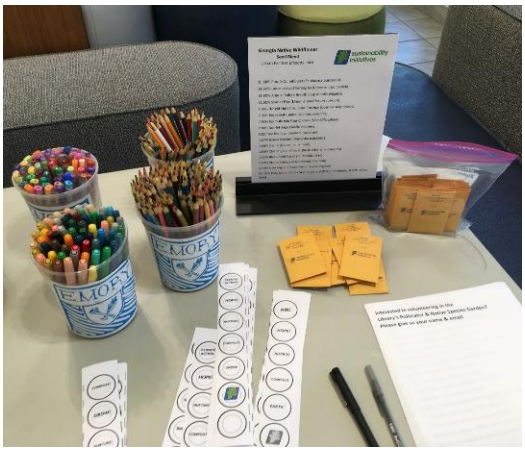
Description: Improve and expand the native pollinator garden established in front of the Robert W. Woodruff Library during the previous grant cycle. Create and install markers identifying each species and acknowledging the support of OSI. Acquire a small set of gardening tools for volunteers. Facilitate outreach to encourage awareness of the project and volunteer participation.

Project objectives:

- Maintain and improve the existing garden with additional plant purchases to replace initial plantings as needed.
- Educate our community about these plants and their importance to pollinators with simple plant identification signs.
- Provide outreach programming with volunteer opportunities to work in the garden, learn about pollinators and their host plants, and participate in free hands-on craft activities such as button making which incorporate the image of a bee to promote pollinator habitat awareness.
- Expand the garden with a low maintenance indigenous wildflower "meadow" in an area outside the library which currently does not have a deliberate landscape architecture beyond three trees.

Results & lessons learned:

- Thanks to Laura Akerman's initial rigorous research and selection of native species and the advice of Erik Edwards, Educational Garden Coordinator, the garden is even fuller and more robust this year. A few plants failed and had to be replaced, while others matured and multiplied in size and abundance of blooms. Erik generously donated a dozen additional plants. We have been receiving frequent compliments as the garden comes into its full glory.
- Purchasing went smoothly with the support of Suzy Stephenson from the Office of Business and Administration, and I was able to make tax-exempt purchases and, in many cases, obtain discounts on plants and other supplies.
- We hosted an Earth Month celebration with button making and distribution of free 1-gram packets of our Georgia native wildflower seed blend. We had about 50 participants and an opportunity to promote the project and recruit volunteers for future planting and weeding days.



- Exterior Services was unable to prepare the wildflower “meadow” site as promised in April but did come through mid-July. Our wildflower seeds will still be viable for some time and with further research we learned that a fall planting was, in fact, recommended for our zone.

Wildflower plots ready for fall sowing (photo Matt Dempsey, Exterior Services)

- The most challenging component of this project was the signage, and this challenge was ultimately resolved with unanticipated benefits. We thought that we had a precedent for inexpensive coroplast signs like those found in the Anthropology Department's pollinator garden. Our initial proposal was to purchase 24 small signs for a total of $179.94. After repeated attempts to obtain permission from Campus Signage, we learned that the coroplast "yard sale" style sign we proposed was categorically not permitted on campus except for short-term event promotion, and as I examined campus signage that was printed on coroplast, I realized that it ages poorly and ultimately would not be sustainable or cost efficient. Next, we pursued the engraved plastic marker style found in traditional botanical gardens, only to discover that installing this style of markers would require going through a time-consuming approval process. I also realized that investing in engraved markers within our budget would limit us to a fixed number of plant species signs, without the flexibility to change signage as the garden matures and possibly changes. Emory's Environmental Graphic Design manager specified that it was the engraved plastic component of these markers that was not permitted, and not the galvanized steel frames found in the free-standing type of marker. Finally, I purchased 43 steel marker frames for $167.70, designed and printed our initial plant identification markers in-house and laminated them at Techlab at no cost. The steel frames are weatherproof and permanent, and we have the sustainable option of swapping out the cards as the plant selection changes, or if we decide to redesign the cards with additional information such as QR codes. Anna Brachey, Coordinator for Climate and Sustainability Programs at OSI, was instrumental in guiding us through these negotiations to a successful resolution.

Articles & promotional materials:

Pollinator projects from the Emory Libraries Environmental Sustainability Committee (Emory Libraries blog post, April 21, 2025)

We would like to thank the Office of Sustainability Initiatives, Suzy Stephenson, and Erik Edwards for their generous support.

Photo gallery:

(Photographs by James Stephens and Julie Newton)