Edition # 27 September 2025

NEWAYGO COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION

NCEC NEWS

The Environmental Resource Hub for Newaygo County

In This Newsletter

NCEC Events
Habitat Workdays
Fall Cleanup
Supporting Pollinators In Style

"Supporting the beauty and sustainability of the Newaygo County environment through Information, Education, and Advocacy"

September NCEC Events

Fireline Basics Training

Saturday 9/20
10am - 4pm

Newaygo Congregational United Church of Christ
432 Quarterline St., Newaygo, MI

This Prescribed Burn Training is for landowners, public land managers and volunteers, and anyone interested in learning about how Fire as Management is a key part of maintaining thriving ecosystems. This seminar will delve into the history of fire on our landscape, when and how to utilize fire, and essential safety procedures for the Burn Crew. We will have equipment and supplies for folks to try.

Following the classroom portion, we will take a field trip to the Newaygo Prairie Nature Sanctuary to view this spring's burn site, and future prescribed burn units.

Lunch will be provided.

Registration

Fall Native Plant Magic: Creating a Lush, Pollinator-Friendly Landscape for Next to Nothing
With Katie Clark of Newaygo County Environmental Coalition
Tuesday, September 30th at 7:00 pm
Fremont Area District Library

Fall Native Plant Magic

Tuesday 9/30
7pm - 9pm

Fremont Area District Library
104 E Main St, Fremont, MI 49412

Join us for an enlightening presentation that will unlock the secrets to a thriving, biodiverse ecosystem right in your backyard (or even on your apartment balcony)! Discover why late fall is the golden window for planting native species, and how this timing not only benefits your garden with reduced maintenance and enhanced growth but also supports vital pollinators as they emerge from winter's grasp.

Whether you're a seasoned gardener or a curious newcomer, this presentation will equip you with the knowledge and inspiration to create a haven for native pollinators and wildlife in your garden. Don't miss this opportunity to contribute to a healthier planet, one seed at a time. Let's gather, learn, and grow together this fall!

No registration required.

September Habitat Workdays

McDuffee Creek

Saturday 9/20
Saturday 9/27
10am - 2pm

Parking along 14 Mile Rd east of Walnut Ave and south of the main preserve entrance at 11510 N Walnut Ave. Bitely

We will be cutting invasive shrubs like autumn olive and bush honeysuckle. Please wear long pants with sturdy shoes and bring work gloves, water, and lunch/snack.

Email Marie to Register

Coolbaugh

Tuesday 9/9
Saturday 9/13
Sunday 9/28
9am - 12pm

Parking at the main parking lot.

We will be cutting brush and thinning trees or preparing a firebreak. Please wear long pants with sturdy shoes and bring work gloves and water.

Updates on Facebook

North Country Trail

Saturday 9/13
Saturday 9/20

The NCT will be holding two workdays in September, finishing the Cole Creek Reroute (13th), and the Alley Lake parking lot access (20th). If you would like to help maintain this incredible interstate hiking trail, and get involved with a wonderful community of volunteers, email Steve at the button below.

Email Steve for details!

Newaygo Prairie Workdays

Saturday 9/6
Wednesday 9/24

9am - 12pm

Parking on Poplar north of 56th.

We will be thinning brush to prepare the firebreak.

Newaygo Prairie Open House

Saturday 9/27

9am - 3pm

Parking on Poplar north of 56th.

Come join us for firebreak preparation and lunch out on the prairie!

Updates on Facebook

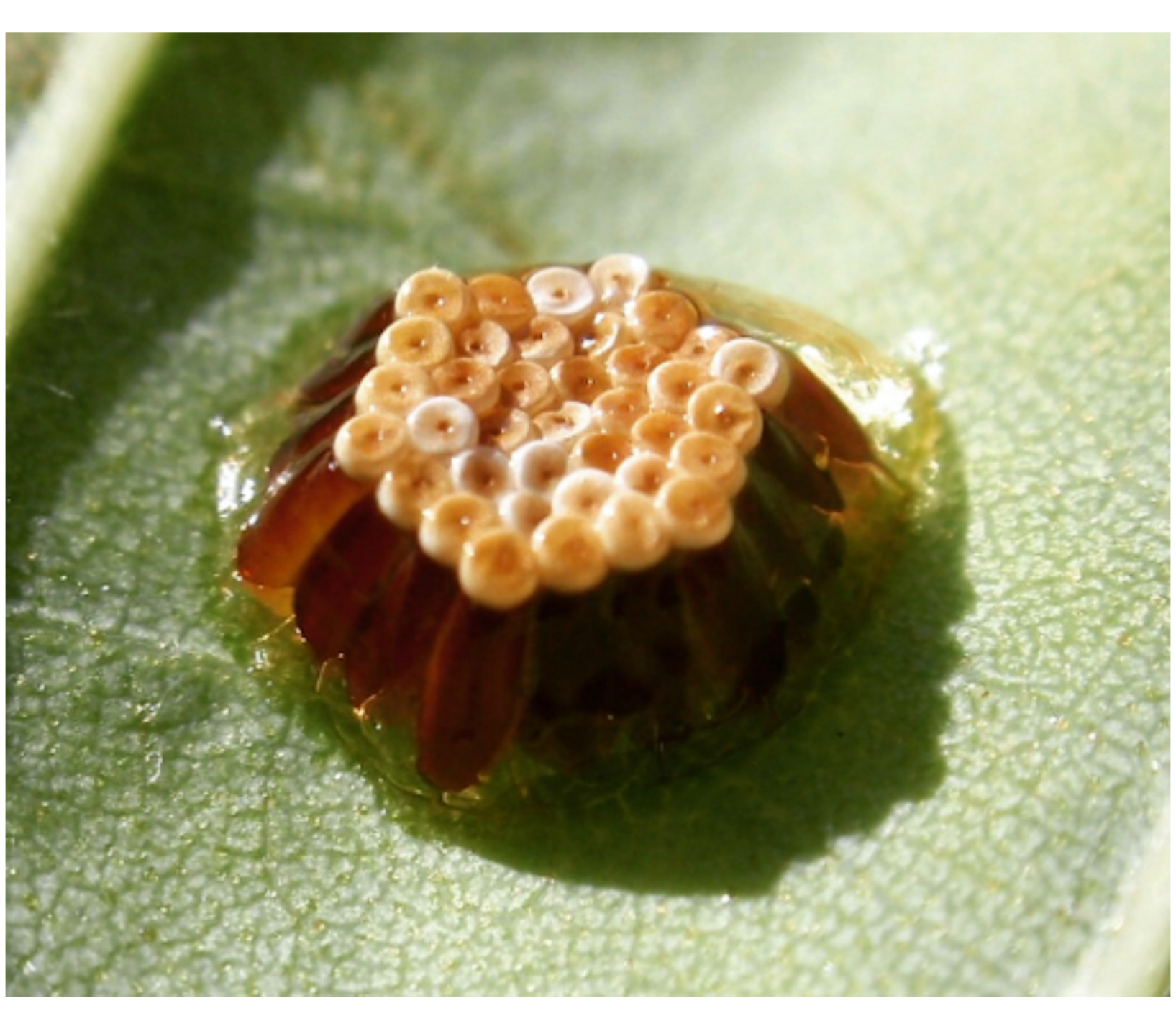
Fall Cleanup with Pollinators in Mind

written by: Rowan O'Mara

The late-August chill prompted me to start thinking about fall clean-up in the garden. For many of us, tending our vegetable and flower beds, wild corners, and lawns will still be part of our rhythms in the months ahead as we prepare for winter's rest.

Autumn is the perfect time for planting new perennials, dividing crowded clumps, and scattering seeds that need the cold season to wake them in spring. Yet as the chore list grows, so does another question: how do we balance our own labors with care for our other-than-human neighbors who share these gardens as food pantries, nurseries, and shelters?

Fireflies have become something of a poster child for those who tuck themselves into fallen leaves, but they are far from the only ones. Hummingbird moths, black swallowtail butterflies, bumblebee queens, and even assassin bugs (some of our best pest-control allies) are among the many who rely on the shelter of autumn's leaf-fall. To them, a pile of leaves is not "yard waste," but a shield against the long freeze.



Assassin Bug (Zelus sp.) eggs. Photo by Nathaniel Walton, MSU Extension

The "leave the leaves" movement bloomed in the early 2010s, and since then, we've learned more about the best ways to tend our yards with pollinators in mind. Many guides suggest mowing and mulching leaves so they can enrich the soil as they decompose. While that does return nutrients to the earth, it can also destroy the carefully placed eggs and chrysalises our insect neighbors left behind in late summer.

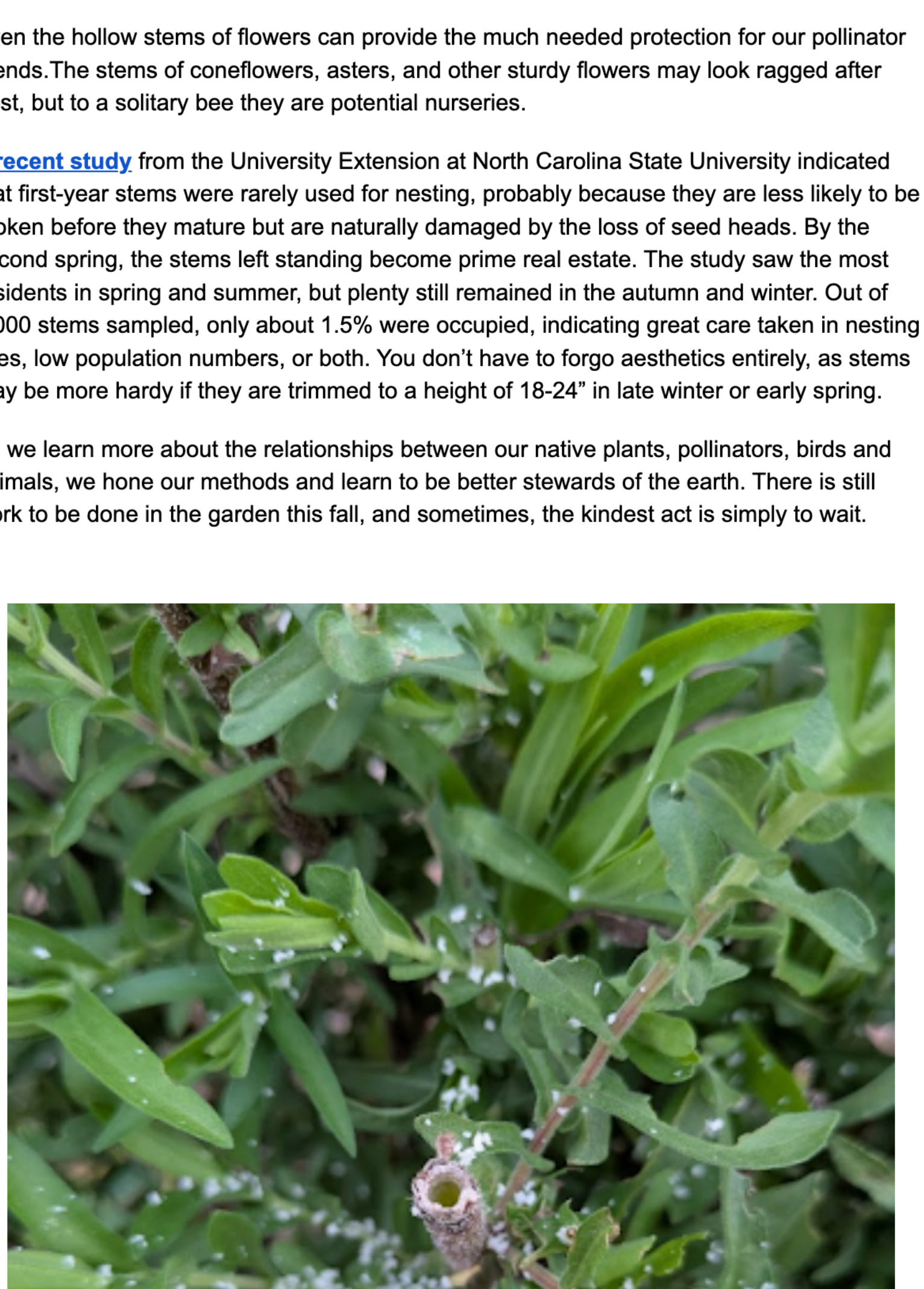
Instead, consider gently layering whole leaves over your flower beds. They will blanket tender roots against hard freezes, feed the soil as they break down, and in spring help the ground hold its moisture while suppressing weeds. If, by then, you still prefer tidiness, you can sweep them away knowing they've already done much good. (For the curious, MSU Extension has a wonderful resource mapping out the life cycles of some insects who overwinter this way, even down to the degree days they need to grow and change.)

If you don't have beds to tuck leaves into, you might try making "bug hotels." A few small piles are best—scattered here and there like secret cottages—since one big heap can make the residents more vulnerable to mites and disease. In parts of the lawn that you don't use for recreating, you can protect any bumbles nesting just under the soil by leaving the leaves right where they fell, and mulching any that remain with your lawnmower once they emerge in the spring.

Even the hollow stems of flowers can provide the much needed protection for our pollinator friends.The stems of coneflowers, asters, and other sturdy flowers may look ragged after frost, but to a solitary bee they are potential nurseries.

A recent study from the University Extension at North Carolina State University indicated that first-year stems were rarely used for nesting, probably because they are less likely to be broken before they mature but are naturally damaged by the loss of seed heads. By the second spring, the stems left standing become prime real estate. The study saw the most residents in spring and summer, but plenty still remained in the autumn and winter. Out of 3,000 stems sampled, only about 1.5% were occupied, indicating great care taken in nesting sites, low population numbers, or both. You don't have to forgo aesthetics entirely, as stems may be more hardy if they are trimmed to a height of 18-24" in late winter or early spring.

As we learn more about the relationships between our native plants, pollinators, birds and animals, we hone our methods and learn to be better stewards of the earth. There is still work to be done in the garden this fall, and sometimes, the kindest act is simply to wait.



The second-year stem of an aster planted in NUCC+NCEC's Peace Garden, just recently hollowed out by a solitary bee making her nest.

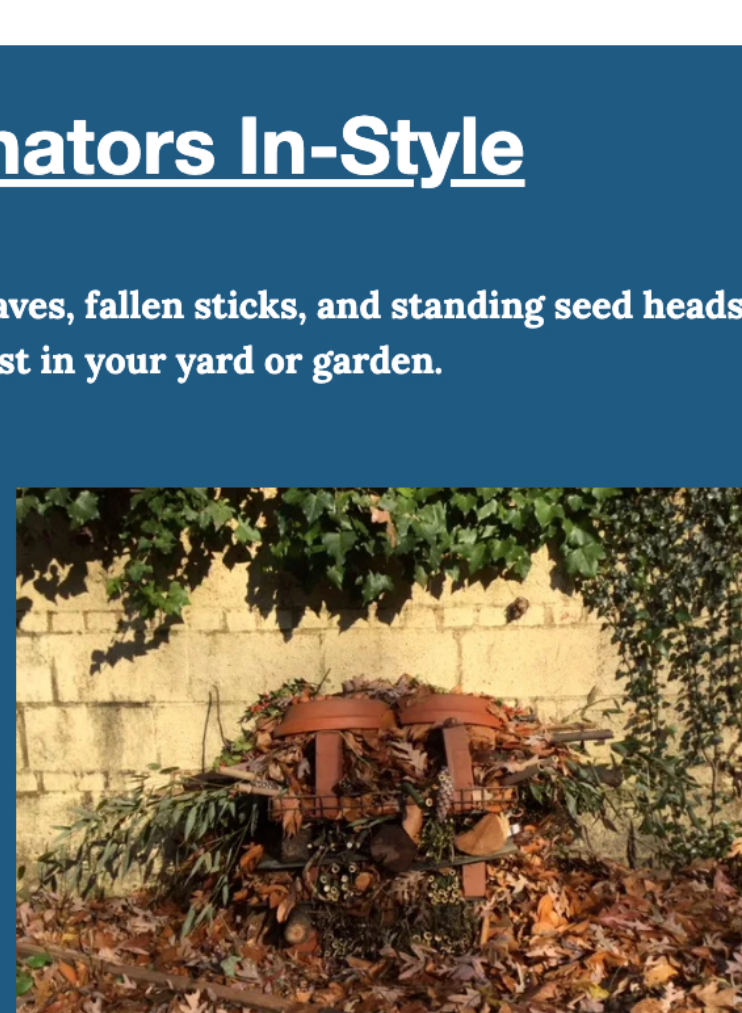
If this kind of gentle gardening speaks to you, we invite you to join our next program, **"Fall Native Plant Magic,"** with NCEC's Katie Clark, at the Fremont Area District Library, on **Tuesday, September 30th from 7–9 p.m.** Her lecture will be followed by a seed-collecting extravaganza at the Fremont Area Community Foundation's Prairie Restoration on October 4th. Come gather wisdom and perhaps a few seeds to plant yet this fall, or bring to NCEC's winter seed sowing workshop!

Back to Top

Supporting Pollinators In-Style

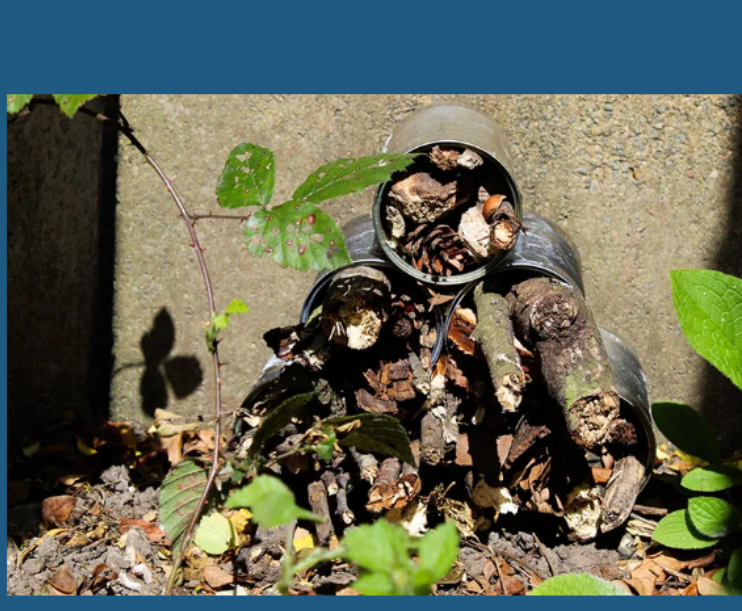
Here are some creative ideas for leaving your leaves, fallen sticks, and standing seed heads while creating aesthetic interest in your yard or garden.

Read the story of how this person created an all in one composting system, pollinator hotel, and community engagement Wishing Well.



This person used a variety of simple objects they had at home like sticks and bricks to create this warm and attractive home for a variety of creatures.

Leaving seed heads standing in your garden creates visual winter interest, especially once the frost hits! It also invites birds like finches and chickadees to visit!



This parent made fall garden cleanup into fun for the whole family! Read more about making critter homes with kids (they'll love it!) - all from free materials like leaves and recycled containers.

Back to Top

What Else Can I Do?

This is our home. Help us protect our shared environment.

Environmental Allies are people, organizations, and departments who are actively doing the work of environmental education, promotion, protection, and recreation in the Newaygo County region.

Your organization can join the list of Environmental Allies by clicking here: Environmental Ally Application.

NCEC will promote your organization, events, activities and volunteer needs!
Click the button below to submit your event.

Ally Event Form

1. Share our website, posts, E-news with Newaygo Community members and Organizations.

2. Join a Team! about invasive species, native landscapes, and restoration opportunities.

3. Get involved with Environmental Advocacy.

4. Bring your skills and knowledge to NCEC.

5. Donate!

Contact NCEC

Your Support Makes A Difference

NCEC is a small but mighty 501c3 non-profit organization! We depend on your tax deductible donations to continue our work, and to help us grow with our Newaygo County Environment needs.

Donate

Back to Top

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