Bees and butterflies are making headlines these days and the news is not good. Bees are dying from a mysterious ailment coined “colony-collapse disorder” (CCD). Honeybees and native bees are both disappearing. The monarch butterfly population has declined by as much as 80% in the last decade. Why is this happening and is there anything we can do about it?

The GCA Conservation Committee in combination with the GCA Horticulture Committee is exploring these problems and offering ideas for garden club members to make a difference - beginning in their own backyards.
Bees

As gardeners we know that bees are the most beneficial insects in our gardens. They pollinate our fruits, vegetables and flowers. In fact over one-third of the world’s crop production is dependent on bee pollinators.

If a grocery removed all food dependent on pollinators from its produce department, a lot would disappear. Of 453 items, 237 were removed --including lemons, apples, zucchini, onions, cucumbers, broccoli - and many more.

What Can We Do

PLANT FOR BEES AND BUTTERFLIES  Challenge members to plant at least 3 pollinator-friendly plants (both native and nonnative) in their gardens. To find plants for your growing zone and area, go to www.pollinator.org. The Xerces Society has a website, click on your region of the country to find information about plant lists, habitat conservation guides and more. (www.xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center). Gardens with Wings helps you identify butterflies you can attract to your garden. Enter your zip code on their website (www.gardenswithwings.com) to find a list of butterflies in your area and a list of the nectar and host plants you can plant to attract them.

ELIMINATE OR REDUCE THE USE OF PESTICIDES IN YOUR GARDEN

BECOME INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY  Find out what’s being planted in local parks, public gardens, and median strips. Ask your highway or park department to avoid the use of neonicotinoids on plants and trees that are bee-visited (like maple trees) or bee-pollinated (such as roses and linden trees).

IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN  Create a Monarch Waystation through Monarch Watch, www.monarchwatch.org you can also register and certify your site to become part of the International Monarch Waystation registry or become a certified Butterfly Garden.

We are an organization of 18,000 gardeners. Collectively we can help our pollinators make a comeback.
AN UNINVITED AND NOT WANTED GUEST

Be on the alert for this aptly named highly INVASIVE vine-Mile a Minute Weed

This is a terrible threat in East Hampton, it spreads very rapidly (often called “The Kudzu of the North”), and when combined with deer browsing the resulting loss of native plants is destroying bird and small mammal habitat and food sources. The weed even moves in quickly to places where phragmites have been cleared, destroying opportunities for native plants to re establish themselves so the issue also impacts pond and waterways. Many on the East End don't even seem aware of the problem. If you spot, it try to get rid of it before the berries ripen to blue..(the birds eat them and then deposit the seeds elsewhere), but do beware of the multitude of small, jagged lethal thorns all long the vine.

Note the berries and small thorns