

Lawns to Legumes Fall 2024 Kick-Off Webinar Transcript

Alright! Let's go ahead and get started.

Thank you for being here. This is our kick-off for the Lawns to Legumes Fall grant season.

We are excited to have you, and excited to see the pollinator project you'll create. If you have any questions throughout this presentation, you can use the Q&A feature which is located on the bottom of your screen.

If you just click that Q&A Button, you'll see the message box pop up and you can type in your question. You can also upvote questions from other participants. If you have the same question. And you can do that by clicking the thumbs up icon next to the question. And that helps us know what the most popular questions are.

If Your question is not answered in our Q&A Box today we will be addressing the most popular ones during our Q&A session next Tuesday. And then both this webinar and next week's Q&A Session will be recorded and emailed to you, as well as posted on our grantee guide. So if you're not able to stay through this whole session, we'll be sending that to you later.

So before we go into today's content, like to just give some introductions. Throughout the course of your grant period you'll see that you're getting from a couple of different organizations, and to clarify that a bit for you. The Lawns to Legumes program is a program of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, which is a Minnesota State agency focused on helping landowners enhance conservation on their lands. And then the Board of Water and Soil Resources has contracted with Blue Thumb and Blue Thumb helps manage the Lawns to Legumes program so they'll be the organization working most directly with you as a participant. Blue Thumb is a statewide partnership that helps people reduce runoff and improve water quality and help out pollinators. So most of the emails that you'll be seeing are coming from Blue Thumb.

And lastly, Blue Thumb is an education program of Metro Blooms and Metro Blooms is a Minneapolis based nonprofit, and their mission is to partner with communities to create resilient landscapes and foster clean watersheds.

So while our program staff work for all of these organizations, we're all working together on the Lawns to Legumes program.

And a few of us will be presenting today's webinar. We also have Graciela and John, who are helping in the Q&A. To introduce myself first. My name is Megan Reich and I am the communications and program manager at Metro Blooms. I help with communication and participant support.

And I'll pass it on next to Alexandra to introduce herself.

My name is Alexandra. I am a Lawns to Legumes and special projects manager here with Metro Blooms, and I work especially with our coaching staff throughout the Grant season. I'll go ahead and hand it off to Dan Shaw.

Alright! Thanks, Alexandra. I'm Dan Shaw, with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. I'm the senior ecologist and vegetation specialist with the agency. I've been working with lawns since the beginning in 2019.

So we'll talk about the introduction of the program mentioned, that started back in 2019. Right from the beginning the program was focused on building a movement for pollinators.

We had initial funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund through LCCMR, and more recently, we have running through the State General Fund.

And this program has been focused on building a movement for pollinators through residential landscapes and involving as many residents around the State as we can.

So we have a focus on native plants with this program. And so that's the next thing I wanted to talk about. And there's a few reasons that we focus on native plants.

One is that they provide many environmental benefits, and our native insects, and other wildlife, have evolved along with our native plants.

We reimburse for native plants with this program. And with some of the environmental benefits. They increase the soil health due to their deep roots. So that's one of the important benefits of the native plants, and that helps increase water infiltration as those deep root systems get down into the ground.

This slide is showing some of our bigger concerns that we have. And one of them is insect declines. It's estimated that around 40% of insect species are declining across the world.

And insects really make up an important part of our ecosystems as a base of our food webs. And pollinators play a really important role with supporting our ecosystems, but also our food systems.

And native plants essentially support these insects. They're food sources for the insects that are playing this important role.

Next slide.

One of the species that we focus a lot on with this program is the rusty patch Bumblebee.

Its populations have declined around 80% over 20 years. So a really significant decline that's similar for the Monarch butterfly.

We think it's similar for many of the roughly 508 native bees that we have in Minnesota. We think there's a lot of decline happening.

This species was listed as endangered in 2017.

And named as Minnesota State bee in 2019. Many of its remaining populations are in urban areas, and that's part of the reason that your plantings can play a really important role in supporting this insect.

A few other needs of this species are nesting sites, blooming native flowers, protection from chemicals and fungicides, and connection to high-quality habitat.

And a few other benefits of native plants, so supporting soil health and...

Stabilizing soils.

Increase stormwater capture.

Food for pollinators, creating wildlife habitat. So we're benefiting bird species which are declining as well.

Native plants are also resilient to drought and environmental challenges which have been important over the last few years.

And they beautify our communities.

We wanted to talk a bit about cultivars, so we don't promote cultivars through this program.

Just straight native plants.

Cultivars and hybrids are genetically modified for aesthetics or other traits, and usually provide limited nutrition for pollinators.

So they're not reimbursable for the Lawns to Legumes program.

So with identifying cultivars, cultivars usually have single quotes around their name.

Hybrids will have an X in their name.

So it's important to check the plant label for whimsical names, because those will be cultivars as well, and shop at native plant nurseries. We do have lists of native plant nurseries through the program for a reference for places that you can go for native plants.

So examples of cultivars and hybrids would be Gaillardia 'Spin Top Orange Halo' (has the whimsical name), 'Spin Top Orange Halo' (blanket flower, so another whimsical name), Gaillardia x grandiflora (has an X in the name, so that's a hybrid).

And there's an example on the right side of just a native plant: Butterfly Milkweed, its scientific name *Asclepias tuberosa*. So that's a genus and species.

And it doesn't have a whimsical name or X in the name, so pay attention to that as you're purchasing plants.

And I just want to thank all of you for participating in this program. You're playing a really important role in supporting pollinators.

And I'm going to turn it back over to Alexandra, I believe.

Thanks, Dan, we'll get more into what purchases are eligible for the program later on.

But to back up a little bit, we're going to just step through kind of the process of working with your grant.

So the first step that you'll need to take if you have not already is to accept your grant award.

And you can do that by filling out a confirmation form.

The confirmation form is linked in your award email that was emailed to you from the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

The deadline to submit that confirmation form is July 31st. So you have a couple of weeks to decide if you want to accept your award if you haven't yet.

And next, we're going to move on to some of the steps to planning your project.

So there are four project types that are associated with Lawns to Legumes that you can do to receive reimbursement for your project.

These include native pocket plantings, pollinator or beneficial trees and shrubs, pollinator meadows, and pollinator lawns.

And you're welcome to do a combination of these different types as well.

So I'm going to give a quick overview of each project next.

Native pocket plantings are just small plantings that can come in a variety of shapes and sizes.

They can be as small as just a 10 by 10 foot area, and that will offer pollinator support throughout the year.

They can also be bigger if you'd like, but we encourage you to start small, especially if you're new to native plant landscaping.

Pocket plantings are also the most popular project for Lawns to Legumes. So it's always a good starting point if you're newer to gardening.

Next up is pollinator beneficial trees and shrubs. This is our second most popular planting type.

These can really add another dimension to your yard and garden. They're great because they provide really important early season forage for pollinators. Especially those kind of flowering trees and early spring really help those bees that are coming out of hibernation after the winter.

Some other considerations are that some native trees have edible qualities. They can provide shade for your property, autumn color, and more structure to look at in your landscape during the winter as well.

The next project type is the pollinator meadow, which is essentially a larger version of the native pocket planting. Pollinator meadows are large areas of native plants. You can create one by planting seeds all at once, or you can start with a smaller garden this year and expand a little more every year.

Especially for these larger projects, we recommend having a mix of grasses and flowers. Even in a smaller planting, think about incorporating grasses in addition to flowers.

They're a great source of habitat for pollinators, in addition to complementing the nectar and pollen that native flowers are providing our pollinators.

And then, lastly, we have the pollinator lawn. So a pollinator lawn could be a good project for you if you have a section of your yard that you want to be more open, or you don't necessarily want taller plants in it, but you still want something that's beneficial for pollinators.

Pollinator lawns typically consist of a mix of low-growing fescues and pollinator-beneficial species. Fescues, compared to turf grass, are a lot more deep-rooted, so they require less watering and less mowing once they're established, which is really nice.

So after you've thought about what project you want to pursue, another important part about planning your project is considering what native plant species you'll be adding to it. It's important to spend some time with this, choosing plants that will thrive in the specific conditions in your yard.

Some of the main questions to consider are:

- How much sunlight is there? Do you have an area that gets mostly sun through the day, or do you have some more shaded spots?
- What is the soil like on your site? Is it typically dry or does it stay moist?
- What is the bloom time of the flowers you choose? It's important to include plants that bloom earlier in the spring and later into the fall, in addition to those that bloom in the summer.

We have good resources for finding plants that'll work for your project on the Blue Thumb website, which is BlueThumb.org. One of those is our plant finder, and then we also have some plant lists that we'll be going over in more detail later in this webinar.

Thinking about planting layout and design is another fun aspect of starting a new planting project. As I mentioned earlier, try to think about going for a mixture of grasses and flowers. If you have space for some shrubs, it can also be useful to group your species together in clusters. This makes it easier to identify and differentiate them, and also helps pollinators looking for flowers to forage on.

Also consider putting shorter plants in front from whatever vantage point you'll typically view the planting. Some of our Minnesota native plants can get quite tall, so you want to think about this visually for passersby.

We have a number of sample design templates for different types of yards available on the resources page of our website.

When it comes to native plantings, thoughtful design considerations can help make your pollinator habitat intentional and help people understand the purpose of your project, which is providing habitat for Minnesota native pollinators.

One easy tip is to incorporate edging materials around your project, like bricks, stone, or other types of fencing, that help frame your garden. Edging is a reimbursable expense, so you can get reimbursed for that.

You can also consider other elements like borders or paths, which we like to call "cues for care." These elements help show that you're creating a pollinator garden, not just any garden, and can get your neighbors excited about your project.

You'll also receive a Lawns to Legumes yard sign once you complete your project, which can be another great way to communicate the intent of your project.

I'm going to pass it on to Alexandra now, who will talk a bit more about installing your project.

Yeah, thanks, Megan. I will just jump in really quick to say, for some reason I can't start my video. So you all get to stare at this beautiful picture of me instead. But I'm just gonna go over some of the quick basics. Some of the larger details around installing projects will come in the upcoming project-specific webinars. But we can go ahead and go to the next slide, Megan.

So one of the most important things for having a successful project is actually making sure that your project site is properly prepared, and there are a few different ways to do that. We're just gonna go over some of the kind of basics around them today.

Number one. Most important thing. If you are working in an area that has a lot of weeds, those weed that weed pressure is going to remain unless you do the work ahead of time to clear them out. So if you're working in a site, say, that has full and the lawn is fairly weedy. You might need to do something a little bit more intensive, like removing the sod. So in the picture, in one of the pictures here we are showing a sod kicker, a manual sod kicker which you can use essentially to cut underneath the turf grass, and you then roll up that sod and take it away. I will say that that is a very intensive way to prep a site. It can also be a little bit challenging to figure out what to do with that turf grass at the end. So you'd need. We want to think about how you're gonna manage that if you're gonna use it somewhere else on your site, or if you're gonna be able to dispose of it, at a yardway site.

Once you have removed the turf, a lot of the times the soil underneath a turf grass area is very compact. And so you want to think about maybe loosening that soil. Maybe turning it. Typically we, when we're working on projects, will turn about like 6 to 9 inches down.

And then rake the soil back into place so that it's even again you have an even surface to work on anytime you disturb soil. However, you are going to bring the seed bank up to the top, so there might be weeds in that soil already that are going to want to sprout unless you cover the soil. So we strongly recommend using mulch or another weed suppression practice like a erosion control blankets or weed suppression mats.

If you are going to use mulch, you can use bagged mulch. You can get mulch in bulk.

The biggest thing that we recommend is looking for a mulching product that is often talked about is shredded double shredded hardwood mulch because instead of floating away when you're watering or having some sort of rain event, the mulch is going to bind together to stay e in your garden site, so it'll just

Preserve your multiple one and create just a better weeding surface.

We get a lot of questions about mulch. You can get this from garden centers. You can buy it in bulk from different landscape companies. But remember using mulch that hasn't been treated with chemicals or died is gonna be the the best product for supporting your native plant, supporting your soil as it breaks down, as well.

So another option. And this is a really great option. If you, you know, think of it ahead of time, and give yourself enough time to do this is sheet mulching. So basically with sheet

mulching, what you do is you cover the area that you are going to be planting in with, say, like a layer of compost, and then cardboard, or or layers of paper like newspaper.

And then mulch on top, and that essentially creates a

Like a composting bed. Essentially, all of that is going to break down all of the turf grass underneath. That area is going to.

Basically suffocate because it's not getting any sunlight. And you will be not only like regenerating that soil to have like a really good

Kind of broken down organic material to plant into. But it's also a lot less like intensive work than manually cutting the sod. So sheet mulching is a really great option.

We do as an eligible expense cover, say, like getting cardboard, or sometimes people will get like.

Butcher paper kind of sheets that are made for doing this kind of suppression. And that is an eligible expense. If you're gonna do this option, I would just encourage you to look into some additional details about how to do this method correctly. And we had. And the guide that we always recommend for learning more for these different preparation styles, is the Xerxes Society Guide to Organic Preparation, which is linked on our website.

Another option that you will often see is solarizing an area, and that is typically done by covering the area in a large piece of clear plastic. And you use the heat of the sun to essentially cook all of the weeds. The clear plastic allows seeds to still germinate, and then be killed off again in the heat.

But this method I I will just warn everybody, there are a lot of steps to doing it right, and it is not the best method for a fall planting. So we mention it because you'll see it. But you probably will not have the time to do this.

Well to kill off all of the weeds in an area, just because we're through the majority of our summer growing season already.

But if you have any questions, or want to learn more about some of these different preparation sites, again, take a look at that 60 guide to organic site preparation. It is an excellent and very detailed resource.

So like I mentioned at the beginning of this, we will go into a lot more detail around installing different types of projects, like trees versus plugs in our projectors. So if you are interested in learning more about that, highly encourage you to either come to those live or watch the recordings. When they come out afterwards we'll have a little kind of calendar, with the reminder of the dates here at the end of the day.

One of the big questions we always get is for this fall. Cohort season is like, Can I really plant in the fall? It's something that a lot of new gardeners are very nervous about. It's something that a lot of experience gardeners haven't tried before. So we just wanna give you a couple of reasons why planting in the fall can be really an excellent choice for native plants.

Number one. New plants are going deal with a lot less stress from like heat, stress from summer temperatures. So because of this.

The plants. Not only they're less stressed, but they can focus some of that energy on growing healthy root systems.

And that is the primary thing you want when you're installing a new native plant, they always native plants are well known for taking some time to come to their full potential. And the thing that is going to move them along towards that is having a really strong foundation in their root system. So planting in the fall is just like a perfect timing for the plants to focus on that. You'll be more likely to see them come up again in the spring. They'll just be healthier plants.

The other thing about the fall is that you won't need to water your new planting as much a part of that is because they're experiencing less of that heat stress. A part of that is that most of the growing season has already passed. So there's just physically less time between when you planted, and when the ground is going to freeze and you can stop watering, and another piece of that is just our falls tend to be a little bit.

Weather this year. As an exception. It's been wet all the time, but it will just be less stress for you. In general. I'm having to focus on that.

Finally, we just want to let you know, like Minnesota's fall planting season goes.

Into October easily. Typically, you want to have plants in the ground, like, if you're planting plugs or a tree, you want them to be in the ground several weeks before our expected first. And that is just like I said, so that they can develop some of those healthy root systems. Let their roots kind of recover a little bit from the transplanting.

But that will just give them a good base for getting healthy, getting established, coming back next spring, and then our Grant season, you will note, goes well into November, and a part of that is because you can also do dormant seating after the ground has frozen. So we will talk about that more in future webinars. But I just want you to know we have a ton of success with planting in the fall, and actually highly encourage it.

So just quickly taking a look at native pocket plantings. You've already prepped your site. You've removed any turf, any weeds, anything that's there, and you've mulched the site highly. Recommend you mulch the site 1st before you plant, and that's just because when you're planting little plugs or little plants is very hard to spread mulch around them individually. It can be a lot easier, especially if you're working.

In a larger garden site to just pull the mulch aside the plant, and then put the mulch back around it, nice and snug.

We have a great planting, video planting plugs. Video that I'm sure we'll send out in future emails. Just so everyone can kind of get a sense of what it, what it looks like to plant a plug, but I promise it is. It is not too intimidating at all. When you are going to go plant, you know, take the time to lay out your plants ahead of time to make sure that you have enough, and you know where they're based, and everything looks just how you want it to look.

When you're planting trees and shrubs, there are specific ways that you want to plant trees and shrubs to make sure that they thrive after they've been planted.

One big thing is that you want to dig your hole at least as deep as the root ball. So that's about as deep as the container. Sometimes it's a little bit less and then you want it twice as wide as the root ball, and that just gives a lot of space for to loosen up that soil, get those roots so that they can grow laterally.

Trees that have been grown in containers, especially oftentimes we'll have roots kind of circling around.

And if you leave those in place they can actually strangle the tree. So we do something called box cutting, where you cut each side of your root ball, so that you have a square instead of a circle, and that will just make it so that the roots are encouraged to grow laterally.

When you put the tree or the shrub in your hole, you don't want to plant it too deep.

Typically, you want the root flare, which is the little part of the tree. That kind of goes out like a little J at the bottom of the tree. You want that just slightly above ground level. You want to be able to see that.

And then once you are backfilling dirt back into your hole, you want to make sure to do it pretty firmly. Make sure you're not creating any air pockets. If there's a kind of an airy root structure, you'll want to make sure you're getting soil underneath that to hold the tree up and in place, and then if you water while you're filling in the hole, it's a lot easier to kind of find those air pockets. They will tumble in on themselves, and you'll get enough soil into that space.

We'll go ahead and go to the next slide.

A pollinator the one of the other options for projects here. The biggest recommendation we have is to do any of these projects bit by bit, so you can create a pollinator by doing multiple pocket plantings next to each other over time. So say in this grant period to not overwhelm yourself. You decide to just do one pocket planting.

And eventually, you know, you want your entire lawn to be taken over into a meadow next spring you could add another pocket planting, and that's just a little bit more of an accessible way to take on one of these projects.

If you're doing this all at once, like.

You have acres that you're wanting to cover a lot of the times. You will end up doing this with a seeding or with very small plugs, and that is just for cost reasons.

You want to check with your supplier of your native seed for a specific planting, because some of the seed mixes.

Number one. There are seed mixes that you can get that are just wildflower seeds may not be Minnesota native seeds. So you want to start with making sure your mix is definitely Minnesota native plants.

But then some of those mixes might have different seeding rate. When is the best time for this to be laid down? Things like that? So check.

With your supplier to make sure you know what the best practice is going to be.

Know that if you're planting any planting from seed it will take a long time for it to come to its full potential. A lot of times we talk about native seeds taking at least 3 years to establish, and before they might even bloom, so just be prepared to to have a little bit of a wait. And know that your meadow is going to change over time. Some seeds come up very quickly and bloom early.

Others might take a little bit longer before you get to see them in your meadow, but it's a great change.

Process to kind of follow.

Protect against erosion in any of these plantings, but especially if you're you know, taking.

Vegetation off of a very large area, and replacing it with seed. They sell seeding blankets that can help not only protect your soil from erosion, but also protect your seeds, keep them in place, and keep them from getting eaten by birds. And and know that a lot of people enjoy planting. So you, if you're planting in a big area, you might as well make a party of it. Invite. Invite some friends. See if you can get some help from neighbors.

To just make the process a little bit less overwhelming. We'll go ahead and go to the next slide.

Pollinator lawns. There are a lot of different nuances to installing a pollinator lawn and having the most success. So if you're interested in this project highly recommend. You attend our pollinator lawns, webinar, which will be hosted by James Wolfen, from twin city seed, but just a really quick overview for this. If you have a very healthy lawn.

You can do an overseeding method, and so what you will end up doing is mowing your grass as short as possible, and then raking away the clippings to expose as much soil as possible.

Different packs have different seeding rates, so you'll want to check on that. But when you go to spread the seed you can do it by hand. You can use a seed spreader. Just pay attention to what those seeding rates are. And and check and see if you want to use any bulking agents like sand or compost which can also just help make sure that your seed has good soil contact.

One of the biggest challenges with starting is getting it to germinate. One of the biggest tips we can offer is keeping it moist until sprouting.

That oftentimes means watering for short periods once a day, sometimes even twice a day. If we're having really hot weather just to make sure that those seeds are always moist. Once it's your lawn has fully germinated, you'll be able to cut back on watering, stop fertilizing the lawn and move to a less intensive maintenance schedule.

You may still want to mow your lawn. That's okay. We just highly recommend never again mowing below 3 inches.

A part of that is because if you cut off too much of the growth, you end up just killing the lawn. Another part of that is that all of the flowers and Milan mixes are typically start blooming in that 3 inch range. So you don't want to cut them shorter than when they'll bloom, because otherwise you'll lose the point of having a Belon.

You can trim your lot in the fall.

You won't need to use herbicides anymore. You won't want to use them anymore, because not only can they kill your lawn, but they can also do harm to our pollinators and our water quality. So be sure that you are dedicated to hand weeding your lawn.

We'll go ahead and go to the next slide. Last.

After you've prepped your site you've done a really great job. You've got it going. Maintaining your project is super important for making sure it's a success. So.

New plantings. We talk about native plants being really drought tolerant, not needing a lot of water. Input that is mostly true. Once they are established in the 1st 2 full growing seasons. You will want to make sure that your native plants are getting enough water to get them to establishment so water at least once a week Or one inch per week for the 1st year.

We do encourage doing that in longer time. So instead of watering a little bit every day, maybe you water half an inch twice a week that just encourages those roots to reach down deep into the soil, to get all of the water as it infiltrates.

Get out into your garden and pull weeds. Do it frequently. If you can pull them while they're small, it is much easier to get weeds after you've watered or after it has rained, and it is very easy to get them when they are very small. Some weeds can grow an incredible root system very quickly, and then like in these pictures here on the bottom, instead of having a little tree sapling, you end up with a full tree.

Tree on your hand. That you need to have cut down. So get out into your garden weed the more frequently you can do it also. The more acquainted you become with your garden, and you'll see more of the pollinators as they're visiting, and get to know some of those native plants that you planted.

Keep your plantings clear of debris that one's pretty common people just don't like to see trash in your own garden, so most people can take care of that. But if you're planting something like a rain garden that can really impact its functionality and then replace mulch and plants as needed. Gardening is always kind of an experiment, and so, you might plant something that just doesn't thrive in that spot.

Might die out, and you need to replant it with something new, and just be open to that open to the change of a garden hopefully over time. The native plants will fill so that you're not having to mulch every year. But like we said, it's really important to keep large areas of bare soil covered with either plants or with mulch.

We'll go ahead and go to the next slide.

And I'll hand it back to Megan.

Alright. Thank you, Alexandra.

So now, we're going to cover some online resources that will be important for your project.

So the main page on our website that will be most helpful to you throughout your Grant period is the grantee guide.

This is your main resource for program requirements, deadlines and questions.

It contains a step by step, guide to completing and submitting your project.

And it also has a project gallery. So you can see examples of what previous participants have completed.

And there's also a handy frequently asked question at the end.

This is also the page where the recording of this webinar will be hosted. So when in doubt, check on the guide 1st for answers to your questions.

The next most important resource you'll want to refer to is the eligible expenses Guide, and this is linked on the Grantee guide page.

The eligible expenses guide what plants and materials are eligible for Lawns to Legumes reimbursement.

So any items that are not on this list are not reimbursable under the launch program.

Be sure to review this guy before making purchases. And if you're ever unsure about something, you can email our helpline, which we'll be sharing later and ask our program staff.

And we'll be going over what are the eligible expenses are in a bit more detail. Shortly.

Another resource which is also linked on the Grantee guide is the monster legumes, native plant Nurseries, list.

This is a directory where we've pulled together some native planters from where you can buy your plants from.

Shopping from these retailers is not required. But we do recommend it because these are all trusted locations with logical staff. Who can help you. Figure out which plants are reimbursable, which ones are native.

If you don't see a nursery on our list that is near you. Many do offer, and that is indicated on the page and delivery fees are a reimbursable expense.

Next is The Hive, which is a community forum space that we have specifically for Lawns to Legumes.

So we emailed the hive to you when you filled out the Confirmation form. So if you haven't filled out the confirmation form already, you'll get a link to this once you do that.

This is similar to like a social media platform, but it's a closed off space and.

You can ask questions for.

Staff. We also have some volunteer coaches who monitor this forum to answer your questions, and it's a great place to just get to know other students, participants and share where you're at with your project.

So Alexandra already mentioned these. But we're going to be putting on a couple of optional projects, webinars going more in detail on how to install a polliter, as well as how to install a pocket, planning pollinator or tree and shrub planting.

We'll be sharing links to these via email. I believe we have already a few filled out the confirmation form.

Monday, July 29, is the Pond's webinar, and James Wolfen, from Twin City Seed Company, will be there to go over everything you need to know about creating a pollinator lawn.

And then the next day on Tuesday, we'll have a couple of staff from Metro Blooms design build to go more in detail on installing the other project types.

So be sure to go to one of those. If you're wanting a little more extra guidance, and we'll be recording both of those as well. If you can't make them.

We also have a couple of additional pages on the Blue Thumb website that might be useful for you when planning your project.

The 1st one. Here is the blue thumb resources page.

This is a central hub that has plant lists, Design templates and Some other downloadable guides.

And you kind of explore the tabs on that page to find resources relevant to your project.

Most of the resources are Pdfs, too. So if you'd like, you can save and print them.

I want to highlight, in particular, the planting for pollinators, design Guide, which was created by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil resources specifically for launch, the lagoons, participants.

It's a very through and covers, step by step, planting and installation advice for each of the 4 project types that we covered today.

Another page on the blue website. Bot can be useful. Is our plan a projects page which is located under that learn tab.

This offers again more, step by step. Advice. For planning design, installation and maintenance for a number of different project types. So that's another area that you might want to explore when deciding which project will be right for you.

And then the last page I'm going to preview for you all. Here is our this is our workshops and online page.

Which is also located under that learn tab. So if you'd like to take your learning about pollinator to the next level, you can sign up for our free resilient yards online series, and that contains a number of different video based courses that cover rain gardens, turf alternatives like pollinator lawns, seed saving, and shoreline plantings.

Blue Thumb also puts on a number of in person and virtual live workshops. Each spring and fall will be hosting a few shorelines workshops. If you happen to be doing a shoreline scene this fall, so you can check back at this page and see what events we have coming up. And fees associated with those workshops are a reimbursable on expense.

I'm going to pass it on to Alexandra to talk about coaching.

Yeah. So one of the assistants, technical assistance kind of supports that we have is a volunteer coaches Who we can pair with interested grantees. Our coaches are often Past Lawns to Legumes, participants, As well as master gardeners, water stewards. Sometimes we have Staff members from across the State who work in natural resources that that volunteer their time to work with you all. So it's a really great opportunity.

But the one thing I always want to highlight is we cannot guarantee you will be matched with a coach. We have Far fewer coaches than we have grantees. And so we encourage people who are especially new gardeners. Who maybe have never taken on a project like this before to utilize this resource, whereas, if you have some experience, look to some of the other resources, we have like using the hive Or emailing the helpline to answer one-off questions.

All that to say, After this webinar, when we email out the recording, we will also be emailing out a kind of coach interest, a sign up form where you can tell us your level of experience with gardening, and if you'd like to be matched with a coach.

We are hoping to do that matching kind of mid-august, so you won't hear for a couple of weeks from your coach, but know that we're working on that on the back end. We do ask that you fill out that survey by August second. If you fill it out afterwards, or reach out to us afterwards, it's less likely we will have people available to help. So best chances are to fill that out sooner.

When you are matched with a coach we'll let you know by email, just so that you're aware that you were matched with someone and kind of be on the lookout either for an email from your coach, which is usually how they reach out 1st or potentially like a phone call. Just expect to hear from them, so that that you're ready to talk with them.

Our volunteer coaches typically will offer just a couple hours of their time. And and what that looks like over the course of the Grant period is maybe getting a chance to do a zoom call with them or a phone call with them for a longer period of time. Early on, while you are in the planning phases of your project. That's where they can be really helpful. And then following up with them. If you have questions, one thing I will say, that I hear from our coaches, so as they do love.

To hear from their grantees. So maybe you only need to meet with them that one time, at the beginning of the season. But they would love to hear when your project is

successfully installed, so feel free to reach out to them and just say, Thank you. I did it. They! They love to see pictures of your completed projects.

We can go to the next slide.

Alright. I think it's back to me here.

So after you have successfully completed your projects, the final step will be to submit your reimbursement request. So let's go over what you'll be needing for that.

The reimbursement request form is located on the blue website under the lawns. Drop down menu.

You'll need to submit your reimbursement request after your project is fully installed. So after your plants or your seeds are on or in the grounds.

Again, you can be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$400 and eligible expenses.

Currently, the reimbursement request form is closed because we're still finishing up processing our Spring group requests. But we open again in mid-august, and you'll be notified by email when that happens.

There are 4 main things that you'll need for filling out your reimbursement request.

These include receipts so itemized receipts from your projects.

Before and after photos of your pollinator habitat project.

An approximate size of your project, so that can be in square feet or acres.

And lastly, the number of hours that you spent planning and working on your project, as well as the total spending amount of your project.

As I mentioned earlier, make sure to refer to the eligible expenses, guide throughout the time working on your project.

Please review this guide separately from here. But just to go over quickly some of the main reimbursable expenses.

The Lawns to Legumes program can reimburse all Minnesota native plants.

Trees, shrubs, seeds or bee lawn seed.

We also reimburse other things that we've mentioned in this webinar, including mulch, compost and edging materials.

The program can reimburse delivery fees.

As well as contractor fees. If you have somebody helping with your project when it comes to installation, or design.

And then the program also can reimburse equipment rental.

And then, if you're doing specifically a container gardening or a raised bed project, Lawns to Legumes can reimburse soil Or materials for that project up to \$100. Again, for a full list, Please take a look at that guide.

So a quick note on figuring out whether a plant is native to Minnesota, there are a few online tools that can help with that. 3 that we recommend are the Minnesota wild flowers, database. And this is just a really great thorough site. That contains information on many Minnesota native plants. In most cases, if a plant is not listed in the database is not native. Another database where you can view the Native range and map of a plant is the USDA PLANTS Database.

And then, lastly, our very own Blue Thumb Plant Finder contains a bit over 300 native plants that are more commonly found in retailers. And there are a lot of handy filters you can use for trying to search for a list for plants that will do well on your specific project site.

As mentioned earlier. Cultivars, native ours and hybrids are not reimbursable under the lawns program. There are a couple of exceptions to that, and those exceptions are listed in the eligible expenses guide.

We have a handouts That kind of gives you some practice, and some more tips for telling apart native plants from cultivars. But We'd primarily recommend you shop from a nursery that either specializes in native plants or as staff Who can help you tell the difference.

Whenever in doubt, you can also email the L2L Helpline. The email is l2lhelp@bluethumb.org, If you have a question about a specific plant, and you're not sure whether it's a cultivar.

So going over what we'll need in your receipts when you're submitting your reimbursement request. please note that launches kind of only reimburse purchases made on or after the day you were awarded your grants, which was June 4, 2024, Up till the project deadline, which is November.

Make sure that your receipts, whether it's physical or digital or your invoice, is Legible. It's readable, and it shows key details, including the date of the purchase, The retailer name, The item names and the total of the purchase as well need all that information to review your request.

And then, if you have a receipt where you're only requesting Reimbursement for some of the purchases. You can just circle or highlight those purchases that you are requesting reimbursement for.

Ideally, your receipt will be itemized, so it'll show the name of each item that you purchased. But if you end up with a receipt that doesn't show the names of the plants or the materials you purchase, We ask that you also either submit a photo of your plant tags or a written out list of the plant names that were purchased, just so that we can verify that they're all eligible expenses.

Moving on to those before and after photos. We just need like one to 4 shots for both before and after photos. And if you can try to get them from far away enough to establish some context of the project area.

It's also nice if you can take a photo from a similar vantage before and after the projects.

So that it's easy to tell. It's from the same location.

And then Do not worry if your project isn't, You know, quote beautiful yet. Whether you just put seeds on the ground, and there's not really anything to see, or if you just have the little plugs. That's okay. We just need to see that the components of your project that you're asking a reimbursement for, are there.

And then you'll also be sharing the amount of time spent on your projects.

For time. You're expected to spend at least 2 hours of time in your project that is considered the match portion of this grant. Your time can include time spent watching this webinar other webinars, and planning.

And then we'll just need that total number of hours, and then for spending make sure that you're tracking the total expenses spent on your project, and that includes any expenses made beyond that 400 maximum. If you end up spending more.

Than that and that will help us demonstrate the outcomes of the launch program. Even if you went above and beyond.

There's some other Lawns to Legumes commitments that you checked off when you filled out your confirmation form. If you did that already, and these are actions that are strongly encouraged. But they're not necessarily items we review for reimbursement.

And that includes sourcing your native plants from as close to your location as you can. We say around 175 miles just to ensure that they're local to your Ecoregion and helping out pollinators that are native to the area to the best extent possible. If you can't source them from close enough. That's okay. If you need to do delivery, for example, from one of those retailers on our list.

If you can, Please try to verify that your plants are free from neonicotinoids and systemic pesticides, Which are very harmful for pollinators.

It's something that you can easily ask at whatever nursery or retailer that you are shopping from.

If you can. We ask that you do not apply pesticide and herbicide to your project site. This can also harm pollinators. We understand that in some cases application might be necessary for a site prep. But just minimizing that as much as you can.

And lastly, following through with project maintenance. So making sure that you're doing that weeding and watering so that you can help Your new plants, successfully establish.

And now I'm going to pass it on to Alexandra to review our project, timeline, and give some final reminders.

Yeah, so we can just go ahead and jump straight to the next slide, Megan. We've gone over all of these dates. But just want to give you one more chance to see them all in one place.

We'll send out reminder emails with these as well. But we'll have the follow-up QA. Session. To this webinar next Tuesday, and then we'll have.

The pollinator project webinars in the following week.

The deadline to confirm your grant is July 31st so if you haven't done that already, please do so. And then just know that you can start planning and doing site prep. Now, and think about where you're going to source your plants from getting prepared for all of that so? That you can plant your plants in with a great plan in place.

The project Deadline is November 30, and like we said, once you get that reimbursement in, we will send you a lawns yard sign to put in your yard.

All of our webinars will be recorded and emailed. So if you can't make any of these dates, we will be able to forward those on to you to for a recording, to watch.

We'll go to the next slide with just plugs the Q&A session. One more time we'll take all of the Q&A questions from this webinar today that were submitted.

And we'll go through them and answer. Some of them live next week. If you are watching this recording later, or you're here, live and think of a question. Later, you can go ahead and email that to the L. Helpline. And we'll add that to our list to answer.

Just do remember to check the frequently asked questions section at the bottom of our grantee guide. We get a lot of the same questions every year, and we try to have answers to those always accessible. So that's a really great place to check out.

We'll go to the next slide, which just reminds you that when in doubt and anytime throughout this grant process, be sure to check out the grantee guide. We put that together as a step by step, guide, to get you successfully through one of these projects. So it's a really great place to look and to connect you to the most important and most used resources that we have.

You can check out The Hive. Please do join us. There really ends up being what we kind of make of it together. So use that space to share about your project, ask questions and just get advice from.

Other project participants as well as coaches and staff. And then, finally, if you have program specific questions, you can always email us at the L2L Helpline.

Thank you all so much for joining us today. I'm sorry we went a few minutes over. But we are really looking forward to seeing what kind of plantings you accomplish this fall. And we are here to help, so we'll see you at the next webinar, the Q&A session next week, and otherwise. Good luck on your project.