

Lawns to Legumes Spring 2025 Kick-Off Webinar Transcript

Welcome to our Lawns to Legumes Kick Off webinar for this spring grant season. We're excited to have you all here. Just some housekeeping notes before we get started with this webinar.

If you do have questions throughout the presentation, you can use the Q&A feature, which should be located at the bottom of your screen, you can just click on that button, type your question and hit send.

You can also upvote questions from other participants by clicking the thumbs up icon.

That just helps us prioritize the most popular questions. We won't be having a Q&A portion at the end of this webinar, but we will be having a separate session next week. So if your question is not answered by our content or in the Q&A box.

Today we will be addressing the most popular questions during that Q&A session next Monday.

Also, both this webinar and next week's Q&A webinar will be recorded and emailed to you, also posted on the grantee guide if you can't make all of this webinar or next week's session.

So before we kind of dive into the content, we want to introduce ourselves.

So there's several different organizations who are involved in coordinating the Lawns to Legumes program.

The Lawns to Legumes program is a program of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

You know who's thought is a state agency that focuses on helping private landowners enhance conservation practices on their land.

And then the Board of Water and Soil Resources has contracted with Blue Thumb. And that's kind of the name you might have been seeing a lot of emails coming from.

Simply helps manage and coordinate this grant. And Blue Thumb itself is both a statewide partnership and an education program that helps people plant for clean water and pollinators.

And then finally, Blue Thumb is a program of Metro Blooms, which is a nonprofit based in Minneapolis that partners with communities to create resilient landscapes and foster clean watersheds.

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

A few of us will be presenting today's webinar. And we also have Graciela on our team who will be helping in the Q&A tonight.

To introduce myself, my name is Megan Reich. I am on Metro Blooms's education team and I help with Wants Logan's program admin and communication and grantee support.

And I'll pass it to John to introduce himself.

Hi, I'm John Bly. I am also with Metro Blooms. I have been working with Alonso Legumes program now for five years and I'm happy to continue supporting it.

I'm Dan Shaw with the Minnesota Board of Water and Solar Resources. I've been working with the Longto Legumes Program since the beginning as well.

Thanks, Dan. I'll pass it to you.

Okay, thanks, Megan. Well, thank you everyone for joining us tonight. Lawn to Legumes program has an overall goal of building a movement to protect Minnesota's pollinators.

So this program plays a really important role in pollinator conservation. Our initial funding came through the legislative citizen commission on Minnesota Resources.

Through the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. And now we have funding through the state general fund.

The focus of this program is on establishing pollinator habitat projects on residential landscapes Across Minnesota to benefit the rusty patched bumblebee, which we'll talk more about and other pollinators.

There's a few different components to the program that we've built.

To maximize the benefits for pollinators. One is the pollinator pathways.

These are larger grants that go to local organizations to build pollinator corridors.

Then there's the individual resident support grants. That's the part that you're all participating in.

These are grants of up to \$ of cost share, along with technical assistance.

Educational workshops and coaching. And then there's also an education component to the program focused on providing do-it-yourself resources with guides and other information.

So I'll talk a little bit about why native plants. So we reimburse for native plants through this program. Next slide.

One thing we're paying attention to is the decline of pollinators. It's estimated that about % of insect species are declining across the globe, and that's raising a lot of concerns for ecologists.

Insects provide a foundation for our ecosystems. They help feed our food webs. So they're really critical for a lot of other species like birds and other wildlife.

So really, these insects are really insects really important and the native plants are helping to support these insects.

We talk a lot about the rusty patched bumblebee as part of this program. It's one of the species that we're trying to save through this program.

Its populations have declined about % over years, so a really rapid decline that's similar to monarch butterflies and we think many other bee species as well have been declining rapidly.

It was listed as endangered in and became Minnesota state bee in .

Its knees are similar to many other bee species. It needs nesting areas.

This bee nests in the ground. It needs food, blooming native flowers throughout the growing season.

Protection from chemicals, insecticides, and fungicides And then connected habitat. The more habitat we can create across landscapes the better off this be and many other species will be.

And there's many other benefits of native plants. They have really deep root systems. Many of our prairie plants go as deep as around 4 feet.

Those deep roots help support soils. They also help increase stormwater capture and infiltration.

These plants are also creating wildlife habitat for birds and other species.

They increase resiliency to drought and environmental changes and add beauty to our communities.

I mentioned that we reimburse for native plants through this program. We're not reimbursing for cultivars or hybrids of native plants.

And the reason for this is that a lot of those cultivars and hybrids have been bred for certain traits at the expense of benefits for pollinators. So they might produce less nectar or pollen.

With the native plants, they have a genus and a species name. Butterfly milkweed is an example. *Asclepius tuberosa* is the scientific name.

If you're seeing whimsical names or an X in the name.

Then that's either a cultivar Or a hybrid. And we'll talk more about that a little bit later in the presentation.

Back over to Megan.

Thanks, Dan. Now we're going to spend some time walking through what you'll need to do to complete a successful pollinator habitat project and the types of projects that are available to you with your grant.

So the first step, which you've already taken is confirming your participation in the program. So thank you.

And when it comes to project types, there are five project types associated with your award that you can do with your reimbursement.

These include pocket plantings, trees and shrubs, pollinator meadows, container gardens, and pollinator lawns. And I'm just going to do Very quick overview of each one of those.

So a native pocket planting is basically a small garden bed or a small planting can come in variety of shapes and sizes They can also be a rain garden or planting on your boulevard that strip between your sidewalk and street.

Or they could even be if you live on a shoreline, a plantain that is next to that shoreline.

And what's important when it comes to the pocket planting is to Start small, even if you're especially if you're new to native plant landscaping you don't want to bite off more than you can chew and We really want to stress that even a small by foot garden is a great start in terms of supporting

Pollinators and there's research that shows that those small pocket habitats can make a difference for them being able to forage and go from patch to patch.

And the program does not have a minimum project size requirement.

So even if you're just focusing on a corner of your yard is great Our second project type and also our second most popular planting, I believe, is our pollinator beneficial trees and shrubs So many native trees and shrubs can be a really great early spring food source for pollinators. We have a lot of bees coming out from hibernation and looking for

Nectar to forage on before a lot of the flowers are blooming.

And trees and shrubs are also great for serving as shelter for pollinators and host plants for caterpillars.

And you might think about doing a tree or shrub project if you don't necessarily have a lot of like space or don't want to devote a lot of time to taking out your lawn to do a pocket planting but you do want to provide

A big impact. Trees can also provide beautiful color and be just an added winter interest to your outdoor space as well.

Next up is Pollinator Meadows, which is essentially a larger version of the native pocket plant scene.

They're expansive areas with diverse native plant species and are going to be your most beneficial choice for supporting as many pollinators as possible.

So if you do have the time and space to create a pollinator meadow, this is a great option.

Pollinator meadows will have a mix of grasses and flowers. Pocket plantings of course are great to have that mix too.

And native grasses can provide just as many benefits as flowers to pollinator bee species by providing shelter.

You can start a pollinator meadow from seed, or you might want to start with one pocket garden this spring and gradually add to it.

Over the years. And starting smaller, as we say, is a great way to go rather than trying to take on a bigger project that you're unable to finish or maintain.

Next are our container gardens and this is a great smaller scale option if you live an apartment or you don't necessarily have a lot of outdoor space for a garden. You can still help out pollinators by planting native plants in pots like on a balcony or porch.

Or maybe a raised bed and those container plantings can thrive for years if you're taking care of them in the ways they need.

And then lastly, we have pollinator bonds. So a pollinator bond is a great option if you maybe have a section of your yard that we'll get some traffic on it or if you just don't want a lot of taller plants in your yard.

Pollinator lawns typically consist of a mix of low growing fescue grasses and pollinator beneficial flowering species.

And the species in these mixes are going to be more deep rooted compared to your typical a turf grass and will require less watering and less mowing once established. So they're a great low input option that also provides some benefits for pollinators.

So moving on to some other elements you'll want to consider when planning your project. A big part of that is considering what plant species you'll be planting.

And really the key to that is thinking about the conditions of your yard, how sunny it is.

What is the soil moisture and choosing plants that thrive in those conditions We do have some tools on our bluethumb.org website. We have a plant finder where you can put in your site conditions and get a list of plants that will be a good fit.

And then we also have some plant lists, which we'll go over later in this webinar.

But one thing I do want to emphasize is that try to find a variety of flowers that bloom throughout the growing season.

So some plants stop bloom in spring, some in summer, and some in fall.

And the reason for this is to help provide continuous nectar and pollen for those pollinators that are foraging throughout the growing season.

Especially that front end at the beginning of spring and that late end of fall often it's it's harder for pollinators to find resources at those times.

So that's another thing you can consider when choosing your plants.

And as I mentioned before, adding some native grasses and sedges are also going to provide extra shelter, add some structure to your planting and help support those taller plants as they're growing.

So planting layout is another fun part to plan. So just thinking about what plant is going to go where this applies for to your pocket plantings or maybe your pollinator meadow if you're kind of starting with one section.

It's great to try and do a mixture of grasses and flowers and shrubs You can think about height. Those taller native plants will get kind of leggy sometimes and want to flop over. So kind of interspersing them with grasses.

And you can also think about putting shorter plants in the front of your planting so like where people are going to walk by or maybe next to a sidewalk in the taller plants in the back.

Just thinking about what will be the nicest to view so they can look their best.

We do have a number of design templates that are available on our resources page on our website if you want some some more guidance with layout.

And some other things to think about when it comes to design is just trying to make your pollinator planting look as intentional as possible.

And that can be great because it really communicates what you're doing to neighbors and passersby that you're trying to provide habitat for bees and butterflies and maybe you'll encourage others to do it in the process. One easy tip for that is incorporating edging materials so things like

Bricks or stones that help frame your garden and edgy materials are a reimbursable expense in the program.

In addition to borders, you can just think about other creative ways, whether it's the shape of your planting or maybe creating some paths um and We like to call these things cues for care so again people are seeing what you're doing and why you're doing it.

And then finally, signage is another great way to communicate intent and If you do complete a pollinator habitat project, you'll be sent along to Lagoon's yard sign once you fill out your form for your project and we'll mail that to you.

All right, I'm going to pass things over to John, who will cover some project installation tips.

All right. So whether we have chosen a template or busted out the pen and paper and planned your project, you know, to be unique how it gets put together. We've got some tips for you to talk about that.

So the first thing in the name of the program, lawns to legumes, we're converting lawns to pollinator beneficial habitat.

So we got to remove the lawn. There are three main ways that we talk about doing that, and we'll cover those Just in the following couple slides.

For tree plantings, rain gardens, anywhere putting a shovel in the ground more than an inch, you're going to want to call go for state one to locate public utilities. They'll come out, they'll spray your yard within, I believe, hours.

And then you'll want to We recommend digging at least feet away from those buried lines. If you get closer.

You want to do that with care. The thing to know about that is that they will locate public utilities they will not locate private utilities. There are companies that do that or you know, if you know where irrigation lines

Service, electrical service to the garage might be buried. Those kinds of things, keep in mind.

Or if you're planting in the boulevard, you'll want to check your city for height restrictions. For example, in Minneapolis.

On the corners within the corners within a certain amount of distance from the corners it's uh I think you need plants eighteen inches or lower and then towards the middle of the block You can go up to two or three feet. And they have these restrictions for safety reasons so that little kids on the sidewalk

And drivers driving by them can see each other and know can do their best not to run into each other.

Um so Yeah, you'll want to pay attention to that.

Um... When we talk about removing sod.

My favorite way is a manual method using a sod kicker.

These, I know you can rent from some, you know, like Ace Hardwares And they're a very good leg workout For you or your neighbor kid, if you're going to hire them to do it.

And you can just cut these swaths of sod and then roll them up.

And if your sod is in good condition. You can post that on Craigslist and free sod and, you know, put it at the at the curb and someone might come and pick it up after you've remove the sod from your project and you want to turn

Loosen and rake the soil, make it nice and even. And then we recommend putting mulch on and we recommend doing that before you plant to reduce compaction. Mulch helps suppress weeds and it helps protect the soil from getting compacted, from eroding.

All kinds of things. In a lot of our projects, we use shredded hardwood mulch. Sometimes it's called double shredded premium mulch or, you know, there's different words for it. Depending on where you're buying it from, you can just kind of ask

A person there and they can help you find it if it's labeled something different. The double shredding helps the fibers lock and stay in place so that the mulch doesn't float away.

Beyond manually removing the sod, you can also sheet mulch or solarize.

Sheet mulching is kind of, it's also known as a lasagna method um you layer cardboard and then cover that with mulch and that suffocates the grass.

Underneath it. Or you can solarize the area with clear plastic, I believe, works better than black plastic You want to make sure it's airtight with the the where the plastic meets the edges of your project.

And then let it sit in the sun for a matter of months.

If you're trying to get this project done. By um you know By July fifteenth.

I don't know if solarizing is the write, it might take the whole time for you to kill off everything underneath that.

But it is a great way to organically clear a lot of land.

After you've created your kind of garden plot project site, you'll want to buy native plants.

As you've heard already and will hear again. Only Minnesota native plants can be reimbursed.

You can make sure that the plants you're buying are native to Minnesota using Such tools, the USDA Plants Database the Minnesota Wildflowers website, the Blue Thumb Plant Finder.

And then, and then Or, you know, you can reference one of the many plant lists or templates that we have and the plants on those lists that are specific to the lawns of Legumes program are % good to go.

The one thing that is not good to go are cultivars, nativars.

And hybrids. We're going to talk about them again. This is one of the points that a lot of grantees run into problems with.

If you go especially to like a big box store to get your native plants.

You might end up talking to someone who is not very familiar with native plants and they might give you some wrong advice on what's native or not.

What's a cultivar or not so Please pay attention.

To get native plants and not cultivars. There's a native plants versus cultivars handout linked on the grantee guide that is a great walkthrough.

Of what to look for in a plant name to tell.

If it's likely not going to be reimbursable. Lastly, we recommend choosing vendors from our native plant nurseries and retailers page. That's because those are nurseries and retailers that we've talked with, they know about the Lawn to Legumes program. They're going to be more equipped

To help you. Talk about the plants you want, find the plants, make sure that they're fully reimbursable and fit all the program requirements.

There are nurseries that do online delivery if there are none near you.

All right, so you've got your plants. We're going to install your project.

We are doing project webinars. In the next month to cover in depth So these are going to be very quick overviews.

For each project type. A couple of things to keep in mind is that we should know there's no need to do any planting until soil temperatures rise to fifty degrees.

Which is about the time that dandelions start blooming. Before that.

Well, you know, you got to let the ground thaw anyway, but then the plants that you put in are going to like it much better.

If you're putting them into soil, that is at least degrees.

So mid to late May through early June is a perfect time to plant.

If you wait a little bit towards the end of the grant.

Period. The heat of summer can be really hard on newly establishing plants so if you get them in a little bit earlier.

And then be sure to water them, but they'll be a little bit better off to handle the hottest days.

So, for native pocket plantings. Once you've outlined your garden. You've removed the sod, you've prepared the soil.

You want to avoid deep tilling. There's not a lot of reason to do that. You just want to shape it.

How you want. You apply the mulch and then our secret tip for this is to lay out the plants all the plants on your area before you start planting each one so that you get the spacing right.

It really helps when you can shuffle them around or you know maybe you have three instead of five like your design and you can you can get that all set up before you're committed to putting things in the ground.

Once you take them, especially if you're using little pots, but I mean, plants of any size might be a little bit root bound when you take them out of their pot, you'll want to break up those roots.

It's better to be too violent than not violent enough in this case.

The roots will do just fine. The worst thing you can do is let them in their root bound shape.

And then they will continue to circle in on themselves and they won't be able to establish properly or thrive.

Similarly for trees and shrubs, those can also get root bound. What you want to do for those is dig a hole as deep as a root ball. Don't go any deeper than that because the roots are going to, you want them to expand outwards

So you want to dig your hole twice as wide as the root ball of the tree or shrub that you're planting so that there's nice loose earth for those roots to make it into easily.

You want to straighten, cut, or remove any circling roots. Oftentimes you'll get trees that are just, I mean, you know, the roots just kind of wrap around and you got to box cut it.

And just kind of from the circular shape that the root ball is when you pull it out of the container You just want to cut down the sides And it feels it doesn't feel good to cut off that much of the living plant that you bought and you're hoping to thrive but it really is

What the tree needs, because those roots that are circling have been trained to do that and that's all they will do.

So they just got to go. You place a tree in the hole at the appropriate height. The root flare or the top root should be at or just slightly above ground level. We don't want to bury the trunk below ground level, it'll start to rot. It won't be good.

Keep the trees straight and gently backfill the hole, watering it to fill up and collapse any air pockets.

Pollinator meadows, the best way that we recommend a beginner gardener to create a pollinator meadow is to do a pocket planting. And then next year or the year afterwards split the plants that you grew, double the size of your pocket planting and take it bite by bite.

If you're going to do it all at once. Which is very possible.

You probably want to use smaller plants and or seed to get the bang for the buck that you'll need.

And you'll want to check Especially if you're using seed for the specific planting instructions, some seed mixes have scarified and are able to be planted in the spring and will sprout. Some need to overwinter on the ground before they germinate.

So you'll want to be sure that you're getting a seed mix and you know what time of year to plant that seed mix.

Whenever you plant it, it's going to take at least three years before you're planting books like an established prairie.

So it's going to take time. Be patient.

A lot of seed mixes, there'll be instructions for how to establish them Oftentimes it includes mowing the first year just because of tallest things that are going to grow early on are most likely weeds.

Follow the instructions. Protect against erosion, which will wash away the topsoil and also all the seeds that you planted.

And then get some friends to help out if you're doing a more labor intensive planting.

Four pollinator lawns, the This method works if your lawn isn't full of a bunch of aggressive invasive plants like creeping Charlie.

All you have to do is really mow your lawn as short as possible.

This stresses out your current lawn and also exposes a lot of soil so that when you at which then you break the clippings to expose even more soil.

Then you'll get your new seed mix. You might want to bulk it up with compost or sand just so that you can spread it evenly.

And then, um, and then you'll keep that moist.

Cut back on watering, stop fertilizing it, and then the kind of low maintenance plants that you've spread will out compete the grass that you had in your To maintain a pollinator lawn you want to keep it a little bit taller. Taller lawns

Even if it's just regular grass, but especially for pollinator lawns Taller lawns shade the ground beneath them, keeping it cool so they need less water, lose less water.

Through evaporation. And I'm pretty make it harder for weed seeds, pioneer weed seeds in the lawn to germinate.

So it helps protect your lawn. Herbicides.

For regular herbicides for a lawn will kill broadleaf plants like the flowers you are trying to grow pollinator lawn. So take note of that and pull any offensive weeds by hand.

We get a lot of grantees that are really excited, put in a garden and then Who really gets really excited is their neighborhood bunnies and deers.

And their gardens get eaten up. Um... protecting from herbivores with fencing or chicken wire, individual mesh nets are reimbursable expenses. We don't recommend everyone to go out and do that.

But if you are in a place where you know your lawn has a lot of herbivore pressure It's a good thought to make a plan for a project that is defensible.

And you can protect your plants. For everyone else. If you're not sure, if you're a little bit worried.

Even if you're not worried, we recommend keeping an eye on it and making sure when these plants are just getting developed.

Someone coming along and munching them might be the end of the plant. Whereas if you can protect them for the first year, even if these fences are unsightly.

The roots will give the roots a much greater time to develop and the next year if you take down the fence the plants will have a much better chance of surviving early season herbivory or anything like that.

There are plants that are less appealing to herbivores. Those in the mint and onion families have smells that for one reason or another.

They're not too crazy about and then plants that are rough, prickly, or hairy, you can imagine those aren't pleasant to chew on.

So you can also build a natural barrier to prevent some predation of your garden too.

And then you've got your garden planted, you've got it protected. What next? You want to protect it from the heat too and water during dry periods during the first growing season from the time you get it planted through the first hard frost

We want at least one inch of water a week on that garden.

That's... About the size of like a tuna can if you put that out and you're not sure. Rain is as good as anything else. So you don't need to water it a week if we're having really rainy year.

But otherwise, you can put out a little can of something that's an inch deep and you can just check that every week and see what water you've collected in it and how much more water you should spread over.

These plants in their first year is where they do so much root growing and watering them deeply is really important to help those roots go down.

After watering, we want to pull weeds too. We don't want those roots to grow. Get them while they're small. The photo on the slide is the three plants photo are all Siberian elms One of those you could maybe pull by hand.

Or at least like a little channel lock pliers. One of those you need a five foot root wrench to pull and the other you're talking chainsaw and stump grinder.

So that's an extreme example but even annual plants, ragweed or anything. If you can pull them when they're smaller.

You're going to disturb less soil, which means you're going to give anytime you disturb soil, it's an invitation to weed seeds in the soil floating in from the air above, a fine place to germinate and so getting the plants as quickly as you can out of there is good. You also want to keep your plantings free of debris. Trash doesn't look good. We want these gardens to look good.

Native plantings are getting really popular. There's a big buzz about them.

If you'll pardon the pun. But there are still people who think they look a little messy keeping the trash out of your garden helps with that.

Those perceptions. And then you'll want to keep an eye. Some plants won't survive. So you will want to replace plants as needed.

In the successive years. Sometimes you'll have to could buy new plants or like I said earlier, you could split plants And do that.

Awesome. Thanks, John. So now we're going to, after we've gotten all that great installation advice, we're going to cover some resources that you can use to help with your project from the planning please do the planting stage.

So the main page on our bluethumb.org website, that will be the most helpful for you throughout the grants period is the grantee guide.

It's within the Lawns to Legumes section of the website. This is where the recording of this webinar will be posted and it includes all the important information you need to know on deadlines and requirements for submitting your project for reimbursement.

When in doubt, check this page first for answers to your questions.

There's also a pretty comprehensive frequently asked questions link on there too.

The next most important resource you'll want to refer to is our eligible expenses guide which is linked on the grantee guide.

And this page explains what plants and what materials are going to be reimbursable.

Items not on this list cannot be reimbursed obviously um and We really want to make sure that you review this guide before you start making your purchases.

And we'll be going over what is on this guide later on in the next section of this webinar.

Another resource to call out, also linked on our grantee guide, which I believe John mentioned earlier, is our native plant nurseries list.

These are the retailers that we recommend you buy plants from if you can as they specialize in Minnesota native plants.

You don't have to shop from these retailers but it is recommended, especially if you're trying to avoid those cultivars which are not reimbursable.

And as we said earlier, if you don't have one of these nurseries listed near you.

There are many that do offer delivery and delivery fees are reimbursable expense.

So all one slugans participants have access to the hive which is our online community forum.

This is a place where you can ask questions for coaches and staff. We will put program updates in there. And most importantly, it's just a place where you can get to know other lawn solutions participants.

So if you did fill out that confirmation form You should have received a link to join the hive in the email from that form.

We also are sending out welcome emails this month and that link to join the hive will be And they're in all of our newsletters as well.

So just bringing up those project webinars that were mentioned earlier, if you are a first time gardener or if you're just wanting some more detailed how-to guidance on your projects.

We have two optional projects webinars. Later in March, both of these will be recorded and shared via our newsletter if you can't make either of them.

The first one, which is what we're calling the pollinator plantings webinar. We have a couple of our metro blooms design build landscape designers who will be covering more details on pocket plantings, tree plantings, and pollinator metals.

And then the week after that is our pollinator lawns webinar. And James Wolfin from Twin City Seed will be walking through the step-by-steps of completing a thrift alternative or a bee lawn.

And then links for both those webinars. Are being emailed out.

Next, the resources page on our website So this is under the learn tab And here is where you can find all of our plant lists.

As well as design templates and we have a number of other guides there as well.

Most of these are downloadable PDFs, so you can save them or print them.

To highlight one resource in particular is our planting for Pollinators design guide Which the Board of Water and Solar Resources made specifically for Lawns to legumes grantees And it goes into a lot of detail on the different project types and advice for completing those.

Also under the Learn tab is our plan of projects pages And this is kind of like this is kind of shorter versions of what John walked through earlier if you kind of want to refer to Oh, I'm doing a pocket planting. What do I need to do to plan the design? What do I need to do to install? What do I do to maintain

These pages kind of visually walk you through each step. And then our plant finder. As mentioned earlier, the blue thumb plant finder is a search tool that helps you find Minnesota native plants best suited to your project type and your site conditions.

It has over native plants that are going to be the ones more publicly available in Minnesota native plant nurseries and all the plants within the plant finder are eligible for reimbursement so If you're wanting to really be safe, this is a great tool to use for choosing your plants.

If you do want to take your learning to the next level, Blue Thumb does offer some live workshops each spring. Those will be opening up kind of in early March if you want to check those out. They'll be on our events page.

And we also have a free online learning series called the Resilient Yards Online Learning Series. And there's extra videos on there for covering rain gardens, turf alternatives, seed saving, which is more fall. And then we have shoreline planting information there as well.

And then if you do sign up for a blue thumb workshop that has a registration fee. Those are reimbursable expense.

Coaching. So another aspect of being a law school games guarantee is if you choose, you can request to get matched with a volunteer coach So in early March, we'll be emailing you an optional coaching entrance survey please fill that out if you would like to be matched with a coach

We do have a limited number of coaches. We're encouraging grantees who are more first time gardeners or who don't have as much experience gardening with perennial plants to request a coach.

When it comes to what you can expect from working with your coach.

We'll facilitate connecting you with one And then your coach will probably be contacting you by phone or email. So just be aware of that. And then our volunteer coaches can offer they usually are able to offer about two to three hours of their time via phone, Zoom, or email.

So stay tuned for that at the beginning of March. All right, so I'm going to pass it back to John.

And I'll quickly go through submitting for your reimbursement. You planned your project, you've installed it now we need to reimburse you for that four hundred dollars.

So first things first, your project has to be finished before we can reimburse you. We need photos of your plants your project in the ground.

You can be reimbursed for up to four hundred dollars of eligible expenses.

And we will open that reimbursement request page in mid-May. There's not a lot of planting to be done before that anyhow.

Four things you'll need for your reimbursement request. Itemized receipts of all your expenses.

Before and after photos of the sites. We need to know that this is new spending and new gardens or you know new pollinator habitat on your yard that we're reimbursing you for.

We need to know the approximate size of your project. In square feet, acres, or number of trees and shrubs and or number of trees and shrubs.

And we'll need to know the number of hours you spent on your project and the total spending amount of your project.

Those numbers help us report to our funders, the legislature that uh you know that we're leveraging public and private funds to do this and you know we have Minnesotans spending tens of thousands of hours creating pollinator habitat. It helps demonstrate the popularity of the program.

Which helps. Make sure that more people get to have the chance to create pollen or habitat through the program.

Look at the eligible expenses guide before making project purpose. Purchases. Even if you listen to everything we say here.

You really should look at the eligible expenses guide and make sure that you're not buying anything thinking you'll be reimbursed and you won't be.

Generally, what's reimbursable are native plants, trees and shrubs. And bee lawn seed.

Wood mulch compost edging, but not soil. Delivery fees for these things If you pay someone to install If you rent equipment to do the install yourself.

If you hire your neighbor kid to help take out the lawn you'll want handwritten receipts or some way to prove you spent money.

And then also eligible expense would be for container gardens or raised bed projects. You can spend up to \$ for soil.

Planters and or raised bed materials.

Again, native plants, very important We're trying to help native insects and those rely on native plants.

How to know if a plant is native Minnesota Wildflowers database is a wonderful website with lots of information.

And lists every plant, almost every plant you can find in Minnesota. They do have non-natives on their site. They'll report invasives. So just because it's on the site doesn't mean it is native.

But it'll say that, you know, if you read. The USDA plants database talks about the range of every plant in that database.

And again, the Blue Thumb Plant Finder. Only has native plants to Minnesota in it that are eligible for the LL program.

Watch out for cultivars. Cultivars are cultivated varieties is that's a The two words that you put together to make cultivar native var is similar idea native variety But it's not a true native.

Bred to express certain traits. That humans find appealing and there's no evidence that pollinators find those appealing or helpful or healthy or good for them at all.

The genetic diversity inherent inherent native seeds, native plants.

Except for a few exceptions. None of these cultivars, native virus hybrids are reimbursable. There are especially a few trees and shrubs that you pretty much can't find otherwise.

Service barrier, for example. Is one of the few exceptions to this rule.

See our native plants versus cultivars handout um image on this page as in the grantee guide for tips for telling them apart And then shop at a knowledgeable nursery and ask for help. You'll find People are very happy to give it. When in doubt, you can always email us at llhelp at bluethumb.org.

Your receipts, we can only reimburse you for purchases you made after you were awarded your grant so that they have to be dated. The dates have to say You know, January fifteen twenty-twenty five or later.

Your receipt or invoice has to be the photo that you submit of it has to be readable.

And we need to be able to see who you bought it from, what you bought, and how much you spent.

If you also bought things that you didn't include in that you're not asking for reimbursement because they weren't part of your project, but they were at the store. Just find a way to highlight the things that you want us to draw attention to.

Help us out, please. We're reviewing a lot of receipts.

Ideally, your receipt is itemized. A lot of nurseries are starting to do this. Some are not. If your receipt does not show the names of the plants.

Or materials you purchased, please also submit a photo With that receipt of the plant tags that you bought or a written list of the plant.

Or the items that you purchased somehow help us what the receipt says you paid for to what you actually got.

We need to be checking that all of the reimbursements we're sending out are for eligible expenses and so We need your help to do that. We want to reimburse you.

All the money that you spent. But we need your help to be able to do that.

Before and after photos, just one to four simple shots. You don't have to get artsy about it.

Far enough away to establish context of where this is on your property. And then it helps if you make a note of where you took your photo from so that you can take a similar photo after your project is done.

When your project's done, it might not yet be beautiful. It might be seeds on the ground. It might be tiny little plants that are just showing a little green.

That's okay. We don't need to see beauty. We just need to see that you did something.

So That's what we're looking for.

Please track your spending and time as well. We do, like I said earlier, want to know the total expenses you spent on this project.

Including and beyond the amount you request reimbursement for. Um and then Every grantee is expected to spend at least two hours of time on their projects. If you go to these first two webinars, that's two hours right there.

So, you know, you'll spend more than that. We want to share the total number of hours you spent. So please keep track of that as well.

Other things we want you to keep in mind, these are not hard yeses or nos, we'll still reimburse you.

But when possible. Please source your native plants from within miles.

Of your location, verify that your plants are free from systemic pesticides.

Make sure that pesticides and herbicides are not applied to your project.

Before or after you do the project, and then follow through with project maintenance, weeding and watering.

It can be really exciting to create pollinator habitat But it also needs to be maintained.

You know keep that up, please.

Okay. In our remaining minutes here, I'm just going to do an overview view of our timeline for completing projects and some final reminders.

So next Monday, we'll be having our follow-up Q&A session. It will be six to seven p.m. Central.

If your question isn't answered here, we'll try to get to all of the ones that were voted on the most.

And if you would like, if you think of a question outside of this webinar, you can email the L2L helpline and I'll be sharing that email at the end.

And again, we have our pollinator plantings project webinar on Tuesday, March fourth.

From six to seven-thirty and then pollinate our lawns project webinar Tuesday, March eleven from six to seven-thirty.

In early March, you'll be emailed out that coach interest survey if you would like to be matched with a coach.

And then the big divine for you to keep in mind is July fifteenth that is when your projects must be complete and your reimbursement request will need to be submitted with all the documents, the receipts and photos.

And then after that. Our team will review your submission and we'll mail you a Lawns to Legumes yard sign.

If for whatever reason you're struggling to meet that deadline. We get a different life situations come up. You can request an extension by emailing the LL helpline.

If you go on the grantee guide, you'll see this little graphic Just to kind of give you a suggested map of which step you can be thinking about At which time of year throughout which where we are now all the way up until July. We also have a handy one-page checklist that you can download

I believe it's just right up at the top area and you can print that out, put that on your fridge and check things off as you go if you like to do lists.

So here again is that helpline email if you do think of questions outside of this webinar I would recommend checking our frequently asked questions linked on the grantee guide first because there is a very good chance that your question has already been answered.

And again, we will record that session for you. When in doubt, there are three main places that you can go for help.

One is that helpful grantee guide page on our website is the Hive Forum. Our program staff will be monitoring that regularly and answering folks questions And then thirdly, if there's a question you have and you're not finding the answer on our online materials.

Or you're not able to get a response in the hive, you can directly email our program staff at the LL helpline.

Which is l2lhelp@bluethumb.org. And that email is also listed on the grantee guide.

So thank you so much for taking an hour of your evening to be here today.

All of us are part of a movement to protect pollinators in Minnesota and also beyond.

We're excited to have you here and excited to see the projects that you'll create.

I wish you an enjoyable planting season as believe it or not, we enter the spring soon and hope that everybody has a great night.