

Grants support ecological projects in Cumberland, Falmouth

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Recent grants to the Cumberland Sustainability Committee and the Falmouth Land Trust will go toward sustainable landscaping workshops in Cumberland and a nature backpack program in Falmouth.

The sustainability committee and the land trust are among the nine 2023 winners of Casco Bay Community Grants presented by the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership.

The Cumberland Sustainability Committee will put its grant of nearly \$5,000 toward a “Lawns Gone Wild” workshop series to educate Cumberland residents on the importance of sustainable landscaping.

“What we wanted to explore in this grant was a way to understand what people are doing with their lawns, from having them heavily forested to mowing them,” committee Chairperson Denny Gallaudet said. “We also want to encourage the thought of thinking of lawns as a way to conserve native species, grow food, and other kinds of activities other than just the lawn itself.”

The workshop series will feature presentations from Aaron Parker, owner of Edgewood Nurseries.

Mainers can make a positive ecological change with sustainable landscaping, Parker said. When people mow or landscape their lawns, they are often, without realizing it, removing native plants that provide natural habitats for many different species.

“Getting people to participate in their local ecology in a positive way can be important for the ecology of Maine as more and more of Maine turns into suburban landscapes,” Parker said.

The first Lawns Gone Wild presentation, “Gardening for Wildlife Habitat,” will take place from 10-11:30 a.m. March 25 at Prince Memorial Library.

Falmouth Land Trust will use its \$750 award to create a nature backpack program in partnership with Falmouth Memorial Library. Three themed backpacks will be designed to help children and their families learn the Casco Bay Estuary and how to appreciate and protect the bay’s water quality. They will contain tools such as magnifying glasses and books suggested by the library, said Mila Plavsic, the land trust’s executive director.

“We’re happy to get that support and start putting these backpacks together,” Plavsic said.

Plavsic emphasized the importance of getting kids into nature, especially in the era of smartphones and computers.

“I think we really need to go the extra mile and make the connection for kids and families,” Plavsic said. “If you just take a few extra precautions from ticks, you can still get out there and enjoy the woods and connect to the awe that nature can inspire.”

Falmouth Land Trust is hoping to have the nature backpacks available at Falmouth Memorial Library in time for Earth Day, which is April 22.

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