

Protecting The Environment in Seguin Township

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Seguin Township is a thriving municipality located in the regional district of Parry Sound with a deep commitment to prioritizing the environment. Seguin has a strong working relationship with the UNESCO designated Georgian Bay Mniidoo Gamii Biosphere (GBB) and Generations Effect, the consulting social enterprise of GBB. Generations Effect (GenE) offers services that advance ecosystem health, collaborative partnerships, climate and energy solutions, and contributes to the financial sustainability of GBB as a non-profit registered charity.

One of the most successful collaborations to date was inspired by events related to the pandemic, when grassy areas at Seguin Township transfer stations became overgrown, revealing an abundance of native wildflowers. Ratepayers, known to have a passion for the natural features of Seguin Township, did not complain about the overgrowth. In fact, the Township received compliments from ratepayers and others in response to this 'return to nature.' This happy discovery inspired collaboration on a robust native species planting project!

Seguin Township, like all municipalities, must cut back roadside growth to enhance visibility and safety.

Unfortunately, this work causes significant wildflower loss. Inspired by the wildflower growth at transfer sites, Generations Effect and Seguin Township launched a planting project that for the last two years, has led to native species plantings at several of Seguin's transfer sites, cemeteries and other public spaces in the spirit of keeping strong wildflower stock present. One benefit of these designated areas is the higher quality milkweed for monarch butterflies that can grow in these protected spots. Milkweed on roadsides can often get covered in dust and calcium and draws monarchs closer to threats of collision with cars.

Native plants matter because they occur naturally in a region, having co-adapted to local conditions alongside other native species, such as pollinators, that rely on them. Across Ontario there are thousands of pollinator species that play a vital role in supporting the overall health of ecosystems and other species, as well as producing many different food crops that people depend upon. But pollinator species are in serious decline, in part due to habitat loss. Native plants are the safest bet when it comes to creating habitat for pollinators!

For the Seguin projects, native plants were sourced by GenE from Grow Wild, a native plant nursery in



Ontario (<https://www.nativeplantnursery.ca/>). Species were selected based on hardiness (ensuring minimal water is needed to get established), and a variety of bloom types and timing, serving both aesthetic and pollinator needs.

Hundreds of individual flowers, ferns, and shrubs have been planted, such as: asters, milkweeds, wild columbine, black-eyed Susan, and dogwoods. After planting, the sites are staked and small signs put in place. Already success is visible as mature plants establish and flower each year!

GBB provides a number of free resources to support natural habitat in the Biosphere region, along the eastern shores of Georgian Bay, such as a "Best for the Biosphere" list, and a "Planting for Pollinators" guidebook available online (<https://georgianbaybiosphere.com/conservation-guides/#plants>).

For more information, visit:

- » www.seguin.ca
- » www.georgianbaybiosphere.com
- » www.generationseffect.com

