

The Native Urbanscapes Nursery Project Has Begun!

Doreen Abubakar is transforming vacant lots in New Haven, CT into gardens where teens propagate, grow, and sell pollinator- and bird-friendly native plants and vegetables. Doreen is founder and executive director of Community Place-making Engagement Network (CPEN) and organizer of New Haven's Pollinator Pathway. This year CPEN has launched two initiatives: the Native Urbanscapes Nursery project and the 4x4 Urban Salad Garden Kits for Newhallville residents, a food insecure neighborhood. With the garden kits, families receive everything they need to learn how to grow their own vegetables and eat healthier foods.



Fire Ring Farm in Portland, CT is helping CPEN members select seeds for their 4x4 Urban Salad Garden Kits.



Teens in Newhallville working with partners from Menunkatuck Audubon growing native plants.

Doreen and CPEN member Loreen Lawrence recently visited the Fire Ring Farm in Portland, CT where head Farmer Nancy Livensparger helped them with seed selection and planting of over 400 seeds for CPEN's Access to Fresh Food Initiative project, Learn and Grow. CPEN created and designed a 4" x 4" Urban Salad Garden Kit. Six families in the Newhallville neighborhood will receive tools, materials, planting instructions, and seedlings of nutritious edibles to plant, care for, and grow, in their own backyards.

For the *Native Urbanscapes Nursery Project*, CPEN partnered with the Menunkatuck Audubon Society to apply for funding to create a native plant nursery in New Haven. The group then gained permission from the city of New Haven to install raised-bed gardens in 2 vacant lots. CPEN's work focuses on improving quality of life through engagement and the repurposing of public spaces to increase health and wellness in underserved neighborhoods. Partners from the Darien and Norwalk Pollinator Pathways are helping design the 12"x4" raised beds and raise money for materials. The partnering non-profit organizations will work with CPEN's Community Youth in Action (CYIA) High School students from Newhallville to assemble the beds and plant them in early July.

The CYIA youth group will plant 800 native perennial plugs and 400 native bare root shrubs in their nursery plot. Youth will receive a stipend to learn basic carpentry, native plant nursery skills, and management.

This summer, the teens will water the plants and monitor them for proper growth. At the close of the season, 600 of the plants will be sold at the Menunkatuck Annual Plant Sale, 400 will be priced for retail sale, and the remaining 200 will be donated to low-income inner-city residents to plant at their homes, helping to connect the New Haven Pollinator Pathway.



CYIA teens growing native plants in Newhallville.



Pollinator Pathway partners, left to right, Louise Washer (Norwalk), Doreen Abubakar (New Haven and CPEN), Deepika Saksena and Juliet Cain (Darien).

We are still raising money to make this project happen. **If you would like to contribute,** or to learn more about the Community Place-making Engagement Network, or to get information on how to create a project like *Native Urbanscapes Nursery* in your city, **contact** DoreenAbubakar@gmail.com.