

Pollinator-Friendly Certification Criteria for Massachusetts - 2019

ESTABLISHMENT

Certified

- Establishment and maintenance plan – *Template to be developed*
- Monitoring plan – *Template to be developed*
- Seed mix(es) used on-site not pre-treated with insecticide or fungicide
- Seed mix(es) includes only native species
- Seed mix(es) appropriate for local conditions (soil type, hydrology, etc.)
- At least 33% of site planned to have flowering plants
- Seed mix(es) contain at least 9 species comprising 2% or more of seed mix
- Seed mix(es) contain at least 3 blooming species per season, comprising 2% or more of seed mix, for 2 of 4 seasons (April, May/June, July/August, September/October),
- Amount of seed to be planted is determined according to the seed provider's recommendation and the proposed planting density in target area
- Trim zone plantings include only native species
- Trim zone plantings are appropriate for local conditions (soil type, hydrology, etc.)
- Trim zone plantings include at least 50% flowering plants
- Vegetation screen, if present, will include only native species, unless specified otherwise by municipal permitting authorities
- Vegetation screen, if present, includes only plants appropriate for local conditions (soil type, hydrology, etc.), unless specified otherwise by municipal permitting authorities
- At least 25% of species selected for planting support specialist bees or are host plants for rare or uncommon butterfly and moth species.
- Fencing:
 - New arrays: A 6-12 inch gap should be left at the bottom of the fence for wildlife passage
 - Existing arrays: A hole at least 6 inches high and 18 inches wide should be cut in each corner of the array fencing to allow wildlife passage through the array.

Silver

Certified requirements, plus the following:

- At least 50% of site planned to have flowering plants
- Seed mix(es) contain at least 15 species comprising 2% or more of seed mix
- Seed mix(es) contain at least 3 blooming species per season comprising 2% or more of seed mix, for 3 of 4 seasons (April, May/June, July/August, September/October),
- At least 33% of species selected for planting support specialist bees or are host plants for rare or uncommon butterfly and moth species.
- Creation of nesting sites for bees, either ground or cavity type. *See BMPs for guidance on creation of nesting sites.*

Gold

Certified requirements, plus the following:

- At least 60% of site planned to have flowering plants
- Seed mix(es) contain at least 20 species, comprising 2% or more of seed mix
- Seed mix(es) contain at least 3 blooming species per season each comprising 2% or more of seed mix, for all 4 seasons (April, May/June, July/August, September/October)
- At least 40% of species selected for planting support specialist bees or are host plants for rare or uncommon butterfly and moth species.
- Creation of both ground and cavity type bee nesting sites. *See BMPs for guidance.*
- Creation of clear, perennial water source. *See BMPs for guidance.*
- Signage/education – 3 or more signs stating site is pollinator-friendly, or a bench and display

Platinum

Gold requirements, plus the following:

- Solar facility is not sited on land that was previously undeveloped (i.e. not sited on land that was formally in agricultural production or open, undeveloped land, such as a grassland, shrubland, or forest).

MANAGEMENT

Certified

- Mowing no more than once per year in array footprint and array perimeter. *Mowing only once per year management to be followed after 3 years of establishment. We recognize that in the first 3 years, multiple mowing treatments may be required to reduce growth of invasive or other weed plants.*
- During establishment period (first 3 years), have botanist or other individual with vetted plant identification skills flag invasive plants for removal. Spot treatment of invasive species with herbicide or weed-whacker is acceptable throughout the season.
- No insecticide or fungicide use
- Submit annual request for exclusion from spraying for mosquitoes and maintain “no spray” signage. (<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/pesticides/mosquito/pesticide-application-exclusions.html>)
- Maintain log of mowing and any other vegetation management activities occurring on site

Silver

Certified requirements, plus the following:

- Maintain nesting habitat (cavity or bare ground)

Gold and Platinum

Certified requirements, plus the following:

- Maintain nesting habitat (cavity and bare ground)
- Maintain perennial water source
- Maintain signage, or bench and display

Additional Recommendations

- Mow only 1/3 of array perimeter per year
- Mow in late winter/early spring (March 1- May 1), to avoid cutting blooming plants, and to allow for over-wintering habitat for pollinators in uncut vegetation.
- Set mower height at 7-12 inches

MONITORING

Monitoring should be conducted in the growing season 3 years after planting. Make at least three visits in 3 of 4 seasons (April, May/June, July/August, September/October); 4 visits for Gold Certification. Monitoring visits must be at least two weeks apart (e.g. do not visit April 30 and May 2 to represent 2 separate seasons).

- Assess % of site with currently blooming species
- Assess % of site dominated by native plants
- Assess plant diversity- # of blooming species that comprise more than 2% cover, and list species, note which species are butterfly host plants or provide nectar/pollen resources to specialist bees
- Assess % of invasive plant cover
- Assess % of trim zone composed of flowering plants
- Assess % of trim zone comprised of native plants
- Assess plant diversity in trim zone, listing species that comprise at least 2% of site, note which species are butterfly host plants or provide nectar/pollen resources to specialist bees
- List any currently blooming plants in vegetation screen
- Document any ground nesting sites on the property
- Document any cavity nesting sites on the property, including created habitat, dead trees, snags, or fallen logs
- Document any perennial water sources on the property
- Document signage/education –signs stating pollinator-friendly, display, bench?
- Put out snake board (1/acre) and check during site visits??
- Document any turtles on property
- Document any bird species nesting on property
- Prepare report – *Template to be developed*

EVALUATION

Certified

- At least 33% of array footprint and perimeter dominated by flowering plants
- At least 9 species comprise 2% or more of array footprint and perimeter
- At least 50% of array footprint and perimeter is native species
- 10% or less of array footprint and perimeter is invasive species
- At least 3 blooming species present per season, for 2 of 4 seasons (April, May/June, July/August, September/October), comprising 2% or more of site
- Trim zone includes at least 50% native species
- Trim zone includes at least 50% flowering species
- 10% or less of trim zone is invasive species
- Vegetation screen, if present, includes at least 50% native species
- Vegetation screen, if present, is less than 10% invasive species
- At least 25% of species present support specialist bees or are host plants for uncommon or rare butterfly and moth species.
- Clear and complete vegetation management log has been maintained and submitted annually throughout the establishment period.

Silver

- At least 40% of array footprint and perimeter dominated by flowering plants
- At least 15 species comprise 2% or more of array footprint and perimeter
- At least 50% of array footprint and perimeter is native species
- 10% or less of array footprint and perimeter is invasive species
- At least 3 blooming species present per season, for 3 of 4 seasons (April, May/June, July/August, September/October), comprising 2% or more of site
- Trim zone includes at least 50% native species
- Trim zone includes at least 50% flowering plants
- 10% or less of trim zone is invasive species
- Vegetation screen, if present, includes at least 50% native species
- Vegetation screen, if present, is less than 10% invasive species
- At least 33% of species present support specialist bees or are host plants for uncommon or rare butterfly and moth species.
- “No spray” signage is well-maintained and legible.
- Clear and complete vegetation management log has been maintained and submitted annually throughout the establishment period.
- Cavity nesting sites present and maintained on-site, OR ground nesting sites present and maintained on site.

Gold

- At least 60% of array footprint and perimeter dominated by flowering plants
- At least 20 species comprise 2% or more of array footprint and perimeter

- At least 50% of array footprint and perimeter is native species
- 10% or less of array footprint and perimeter is invasive species
- At least 3 blooming species present per season, for all 4 seasons (April, May/June, July/August, September/October), each comprising 2% or more of site
- Trim zone includes at least 50% native species
- Trim zone includes at least 50% flowering plants
- 10% or less of trim zone is invasive species
- Vegetation screen, if present, includes at least 50% native species
- Vegetation screen, if present, is less than 10% invasive species
- At least 40% of species present support specialist bees or are host plants for uncommon or rare butterfly and moth species.
- “No spray” signage is well-maintained and legible.
- Clear and complete vegetation management log has been maintained and submitted annually throughout the establishment period.
- Cavity nesting sites present and maintained on site.
- Ground nesting sites present and maintained on site.
- Clear, perennial water source present and maintained on site.
- Signage, display and/or bench are legible and in good condition.

If the site meets Establishment criteria, it will be certified as Pollinator-Friendly for 3 years from when plantings were first established.

If the site meets Evaluation criteria after 3 years, the certification will continue for 2 additional years. Monitoring should be conducted every other year thereafter to continue certification.

If the site does not meet Evaluation criteria after 3 years and the solar PV site owner wishes the property to remain certified, the site owner can submit a plan describing how management activities will be adapted to achieve the certification requirements, and the preferred re-evaluation time window (1-2 years later). If the plan is accepted, certification then remains in effect until the next evaluation. If improvement is seen, but the site still does not meet Evaluation criteria, the site will maintain certification for one additional year. If no improvements are seen, the site owner must work with the oversight entity to adapt the plan to achieve certification requirements, or lose certification.