

# Unexpected Delights of a Neighborhood Granite Garden

Bethe Hagens, Ph.D.

Walden University School of Public Policy and Administration

## Introduction

A clogged drainage culvert in our long-established coastal Maine neighborhood was neglected. What had been a seasonal creek flowing through our shared old growth forest expanded into a marsh. Within two years, the forest died, revealing 100 years' accumulation of broken glass, garbage, and even parts of an old Model T! The forest had been the children's refuge but was now totally unsafe. Our land was most severely impacted. The bright side, though, was that we now had sun and could have a food garden. Over six years, with neighbors' help, we filled 5 huge dumpsters with dangerous debris. We unearthed more than 100 tons of granite boulders. New plants appeared, and I began the fascinating process of identifying them along with others I had previously planted or considered to be weeds or brush. We now have upwards of 400 species--most of them edible, medicinal, and perennial! A new food plant appears with each moon.

## Kindling deeper friendships

*"There is no one public response to climate change. Instead, there are different audiences or "interpretive communities" within society who each respond to the issue in their own distinct ways."* Jennifer R. Marlong, PhD



120 tons of heat-retaining granite form beds.



Soft, water-absorbent coir prevents erosion.



Paths connect all homes in the neighborhood.



Grapes run out over the marsh on stainless wires which culminate in a wild raspberry island. Delicious, nutritious purslane (top right) is always a surprise to those who want to pull it out as a pernicious weed. A mixed bed of bee balm, bearberry, cold-hardy fig, sea kale, and celery (bottom right) are prolific and feed many species of garden visitors.



## Companion planting



Active consumers in our forest-garden ecosystem include not only neighbors but native bees, birds, and bugs; tick-eating, manure-producing chickens; moles and chipmunks who keep the cat happy; catmint, which keeps the cat even happier; two dry rock drainage beds for milkweed, butterflies, frogs and a turtle; and an assortment of visitors who like the idea of "tasting" (and sometimes growing) perennial Chinese, Korean, American, and Indian fruits, vegetables, and medicinal plants. . . along with a handful of annual "standards."

## Acknowledgements

Cornell Lab of Ornithology [www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu)  
Eat the Weeds (Green Deane) [www.eattheweeds.com](http://www.eattheweeds.com)  
Plants for a Future [www.pfaf.org](http://www.pfaf.org)  
Go Botany (Discover thousands of New England plants)  
<https://gobotany.newenglandwild.org>  
The Herbarium <https://theherbalacademyofne.com>  
Invasive Plant Atlas of New England [www.eddmaps.org/ipane](http://www.eddmaps.org/ipane)

Walden University, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Research Dissemination Support grant  
Bennett Steele, Wheelwright Landscapes, Falmouth, Maine  
Brian Fairfield, stonemason, Kennebunk, Maine  
Neighbors of "Creek Corner," Kennebunkport, Maine  
Aaron Parker, Falmouth, Maine  
Mushroom-Collecting.com (New England)  
**More Information?** [www.facebook.com/GraniteGarden](https://www.facebook.com/GraniteGarden)  
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Before



After



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Before



After

