

Students bring native plants to Millen Stadium

CONWAY — Preserving plant diversity in New Hampshire is important, says Ralph Lutjen, master gardener of the Mountain Garden Club. Lutjen recently gave a presentation about native plant species to science teacher Christopher Darling's general biology classes at Kennett High School.

Lutjen is interested in preserving the beauty and nature of New Hampshire. In addition to being a master gardener, he is a N.H. natural resource steward. Lutjen is also a member of the Town of Madison Conservation Commission and has been involved in many community beautification projects in Mount Washington Valley. On this project he worked with Kennett groundskeeper Andy Bechtold on the site plan and the design of the planting beds.

Students in Darling's biology classes in return helped to research and select a number of native plants for the entrance to Gary Millen Stadium at Kennett High. The students learned that native plants are a vital part of our environment and are the key elements in supporting wildlife. They are aware that many introduced plants have no value in sustaining wildlife.

Students completed a thorough search of plant species that were both native to New Hampshire and would fit into the unique ecology of Mount Washington Valley. Many of the plant species selected by students provide food



Kennett High biology students work with master gardener Ralph Lutjen to bring native plants to the campus. (COURTESY PHOTO)

and shelter for small animals and insects such as the Witherthur Viburnum, Black Chokeberry, Summersweet, Bayberry and Juneberry. Other native plant species are well adapted to this region and flourish such as High-bush Blueberry, Witch-Hazel and Sugar Maple. Part of the selection criteria included aesthetic qualities such as the Red-Osier and Yellow Twig Dogwood that contains vibrant colors in their foliage and stems both in and out of season.

Along with a number of garden club volunteers, students at Kennett placed and planted 40 native plants near the entrance to Millen Stadium in hopes to increase awareness about the importance of native plants and

preserving our state ecology. In addition to the biology class participation the drafting students are preparing a drawing of the site as it has been modified and art students are painting renderings. The building trades students are making and installing granite posts to be placed around the flower beds and walkways.

The Millen Foundation has funded the modification and addition of walkways. This improvement will improve access to the stadium. Plants and materials were provided by the garden club along with the help of garden club volunteers. McSherry's Nursery provided many of the shrubs and plants at discounted prices, and Russ Lanoie donated compost to help make this planting project a success.