



Based on the [successful partnership](#) between the Waltham Y and Meadowscaping for Biodiversity (MS4B) to create and deliver the Waltham Y Meadow Club to youth, age 7 – 13, the two organizations are partnering again to launch the Waltham Y Environmental Entrepreneurship Program (YEPP) in 2017. This experiential, out-of-school-time (spring through summer) environmental enrichment program will engage and empower teens, age 14 – 17, to act positively for the environment and themselves by building a service business where they provide organic landscaping with native plants to the City of Waltham and business- and homeowners.

YEPP is a dual-track, active-learning program. Industry professionals and college interns teach youth the principles of ecosystem gardening and how to meadowscape with native plants as well as how to build, market, and launch a service business where they install and maintain native plants for their customers.

How it works

Meeting once a week afterschool for two hours over 12 sessions, students experience the Meadowscaping for Biodiversity curriculum and the Business Entrepreneurship curriculum, both customized and delivered by industry professionals and college mentors.

In late spring, over four sessions, youth and college interns will “apprentice” with a landscape designer to plan and plant a meadow for the public to see in Waltham. This meadow will serve as a staging area for new plants and a visual model to showcase student services to potential customers. After the first year, the meadow will supply some seeds and plants for future efforts, thus reducing the need to purchase them.

Also during the spring, students pre-sell native plants to property owners and then purchase inventory from native plant providers such as New England Wildflower Society, the Waltham Garden Club, Russell’s Garden Center and American Meadows, etc.

Youth receive a stipend of \$11/hour (\$22/session) to attend the 16 afterschool sessions. In summer students will be compensated by customers for their planting services. A MS4B staff member and/or college intern will mentor the youth as they deliver their services.

MS4B's Founder Barbara Passero and Co-Creator Jean Devine have designed and will lead the program. Barbara, a graduate of Simmons School of Library and Information Science, has a background in science education, environmental literacy, and advocacy. Jean Devine, a graduate of Simmons School of Management has expertise in business communications, program delivery, and curriculum design.

Why this program now?

This innovative program helps to solve two timely challenges. The first is a critical socio-economic challenge—how to help youth develop skills they can use to get jobs and to advance their personal, academic, and career directions. With caring staff and college intern team leaders/mentors, who are nearer their age, the learning situation will be richer, and students will feel more comfortable.

The second challenge is a serious, environmental issue affecting all of society—how to restore vital biodiversity (essential to all life on this planet) and wildlife habitat in our community where development has far outpaced preservation of open space. This program offers students, mentors, funders, and customers a way to feel hopeful about the environment and the future.

We believe the YEEP presents an opportunity for the formation of productive, forward-thinking collaborations among public and private entities across Waltham and can serve as a valuable model for youth engagement in Waltham and other communities.