

MILLS PARK AND THE VLY – A HISTORY OF CHANGE AND RENEWAL
From Livestock Meadow to Industrial Site to Grassy Space to Butterfly Habitat to Village Gateway, Bike Trail, and Sustainable Biodiverse Meadow

Over the years, Mills Park and The Vly have evolved as community assets. In the seventeenth century, The Vly was managed by Dutch hydrology and maintained as a livestock meadow. In the late nineteenth century, The Vly was the site of a baseball field called the Alpha Ball Field. A note on a map in the village files shows that Hall of Famer Dan Brouthers, the first great hitter in baseball, played at the ball field around 1880. Before 1882, a cotton mill occupied the land area now known as Mills Park. Between 1925-26 and 1984, the village's water tower stood at this intersection of Albany and Railroad avenues. With removal of the water tower, ownership of the area reverted to the Mills family who eventually sold it to the village.

Today, Mills Park is one of four complementary Village of Kinderhook green infrastructure assets that include Mills Park and The Vly, the banks of the Kinderhook Creek, Rothermel Park, and the Village Green -- each providing the community with public spaces with their own special character and use.

Mills Park has evolved into a multi-use space that provides a habitat for butterflies and pollinators; a safe and comfortable destination for strolling, sitting, picnicking, observing the interactions of the plant and insect world, and learning about village history and biodiversity. The park now also provides a scenic gateway to the village via an in-village section of the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail. The banks of the Kinderhook Creek provide access to the creek for cooling off in the heat of summer and a planned kayak-launch site, as well as watershed educational opportunities. Rothermel Park provides recreational spaces, including open lawn areas, ball fields, picnic areas, playground equipment, and basketball and tennis courts. The Village Green provides a community focal point for informal gatherings, events, the farmers' market, and take-out dining.

MILLS PARK SUSTAINABLE BIODIVERSE MEADOW – AN EVOLVING PROJECT

With the assistance of the expertise of horticulturalist and designer Sigrid Gray and a dedicated crew of volunteers, the village has dedicated itself to the multi-year development of the Mills Park butterfly/pollinator habitat and sustainable biodiverse meadow.

Now in its fourth year of development, the meadow features native wildflowers; deer-resistant, naturalizing flower bulbs; and seedings of native wildflowers and perennials, as well as herbs that act as tick repellents. 2020 was slated to be a busy season with the establishment of a new mowing plan, as well as increased seedings and bulb planting. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, only the new mowing plan could be completed, with additional plantings intended to add season-long flowering, color, and foliage diversity being delayed until the fall.

A COMMUNITY GARDEN – A COMMUNITY EFFORT

This spring an increasing number of enthusiastic volunteers participated in six weeding sessions at Mills Park, which provided 60 hours of community service. In the upcoming months, volunteers will again be called upon to lend a hand, including to assist with a mass bulb planting in the fall.

If you're interested in volunteering, text Michael Allen at 802-780-8819.

UPCOMING PLANTING

- Later this summer look for a GoFundMe page organized by village volunteers to raise money for 10,000 naturalizing bulbs to be planted in Mills Park in the fall.
- Wildflower seeding in November

PARTIAL PLANT LIST

Featured Colors: Yellow, Cerise, Indigo, Black, Sky Blue, Lavender, Ochre, White

Bulbs

Cama Lily (Camassia)
Daffodils (Narcissus)
Ornamental Onion (Allium)
Snowdrops (Galanthus)
Trout Lily (Erythronium americanum)
Winter Aconite (Eranthis hymelalis)

Seeds

Anise Hyssop (Agastache foeniculum)
Bee Balm (Monarda bradburiana)
Blue Wood Aster (Symphyotrichum cordifolium)
Brown-Eyed Susan (Rudbeckia triloba)
Chives (tick repellent)
Coneflower (Echinacea pallida)
Cornflower (Centaurea cyanus)
Hubricht's Blue Star (Amsonia hubrichtii)
Milkweed (Asclepias syrica)
Mint (tick repellent)
Thyme (tick repellent)
Wild cosmos (Cosmos pinnatus)
Yarrow – several colors (Achillea millefolium)
Yellow Rattle (Rhinanthus minor)