



## Accompsett MS Receives \$5,000 Grant To Construct A Native Garden

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### Accompsett Middle awarded grant for new native garden

Just in time for Earth Day, Accompsett Middle School in the Smithtown Central School District was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Long Island Regional Planning Council as part of the Long Island Water Quality Challenge. The challenge was a STEM competition which encourages young students to reduce runoff and nitrogen pollution on school grounds and incorporate those projects into ongoing educational programs.

Local politicians and members of the conservation and preservation community gathered outside Accompsett Middle School to present the check to teachers Amy Olander and Lou Mincieli. Senator Mario Matteredra, Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick, Suffolk County Commissioner of Economic Development and Planning Natalie Wright, Suffolk County Legislator Leslie Kennedy, Suffolk County Legislator Robert Trotta and Town of Smithtown Senior Environmental Analyst in the Dept of Environment and Waterways Stephanie Hurd were in attendance for the Earth Day celebration.



Accompsett Middle School in the Smithtown Central School District was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Long Island Regional Planning Council as part of the Long Island Water Quality Challenge to develop a native plant and pollinator garden outside the school.



At Accompsett Middle School, students proposed a native plant and pollinator garden for the front entrance of the school, which will serve as an ongoing “classroom” for both middle school and elementary school students on how native plants and natural pollinators, such as birds and bats, can reduce the use of chemicals or overwatering.

“Our pollinator garden has given students the opportunity to see how nature can help to solve the nitrogen problem on Long Island,”

said Accompsett Middle School teacher Amy Olander. “By getting the students involved in planning and implementing the garden, they see how the STEM disciplines are used to turn an idea into reality. Students are also learning that by planting native species, we help our pollinators and birds so our environment can be healthy and sustainable. We are grateful for the chance to show the community that even small changes in our own yards can help the environment.”

The Long Island Water Quality Challenge was first offered in 2019 to all schools in Nassau and Suffolk counties serving grades 6,7 and 8 with an invitation to develop and design projects for their school grounds which will either reduce the use of fertilizers/pesticides and water consumption, or devise methods to collect and treat water runoff from the school property. A panel of water quality experts served as evaluators of the projects and awarded grants.

“Excess nitrogen presents a serious threat to the health and sustainability of our ground and surface waters all across Long Island,” said John Cameron, LIRPC chairman. “We can take positive steps today to instill a sense of urgency in our students – who are the leaders and stewards of tomorrow – about the need to reduce the use of fertilizers and pesticides, and how to prevent harmful runoff from reaching our waterways.”

*Photo courtesy of Smithtown Central School District*