

Editorials are the institutional voice of The Free Press and independent of the newsroom reporting staff

## OUR VIEW: LANDSCAPING

# Planting for pollinators benefits all of us

Despite a recent growing interest in pollinators, experienced gardeners from years ago always knew that the more bees and butterflies attracted to their plots, the better their gardens.

### Why it matters:

Choosing plants that benefits pollinators helps all of us in the long run.

As we get inspired by the greening of spring, it would make sense that all of us keep pollinators in mind as we renew our home landscapes with plants, flowers, grass, shrubs and trees.

Pollinators, including bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects, are necessary for our survival. One out of every three bites of food we eat exists because of the efforts of pollinators, including fruits, vegetables and seeds, according to the U.S. National Park Service.

The importance of our landscape choices is obvious when you take into account that at least 75 percent of all flowering plants are pollinated by insects and animals. This amounts to more than 1,200 food crops. And besides providing our food, plants help stabilize soils, clean the air, supply oxygen and support wildlife.

Local residents have shown an interest in supporting pollinators by urging their city councils to adopt ordinances that are pollinator friendly.

Although the St. Peter City Council voted 5-2 last week against allowing beekeeping in city limits, the fact it's the second time the issue surfaced in four years proves people are persistent about wanting healthy bees to have a home. Part of the council's objection to allowing backyard hives was tied to not wanting the beekeeping to affect native pollinators.

In North Mankato, the council unanimously passed a natural yards ordinance in February. The ordinance allows residents to have up to 30% of the non-pervious portion of their yard converted to a managed native planting area or pollinator garden.

Such initiatives are progress in a global climate that demands planning for the long term. City residents often feel pressure to keep up with the neighbors' well-manicured lawns, despite the negative impact on the environment by keeping out flowering native plants and chemically treating the grass.

Benefits of a flowering lawn cited by the University of Minnesota Extension Service include: increased lawn resilience to environmental pressures, natural diversity that benefits pollinators and the beauty of the flowers themselves.

A diversity in pollinator plants helps attract a variety of bees and insects that vary in what they are attracted to. Bee species also forage at different times of the year, so providing pollinator plants from spring to fall is important as well. The Extension Service and reputable garden centers can help you choose pollinator-friendly plants that will grow in your yard's conditions.

Spring is an exhilarating season when we rediscover the outdoors. Let's also make it the time when we recognize the good we can do by making pollinator-friendly landscaping choices.

## OTHER VIEW

# Worse than the crime

New York Daily News

We never blamed Gov. Cuomo for COVID's death toll in New York. The virus has claimed more than 50,000 lives, including what we now know to be more than 15,500 deaths among nursing home residents. We accepted and accept Cuomo aides' insistence that a March 25, 2020, executive order requiring nursing homes to accept new or returning residents regardless of whether they were COVID-positive — was the well-intentioned act of a governor desperate to keep hospitals from being overwhelmed by the virus's surge, as opposed to something nefarious.

Nor did we assume bad motives when it became clear last June and July that the state's methodology for tallying COVID fatalities in nursing homes was prob-

ably a drastic undercount because it didn't include residents who died in hospitals.

But it's now clear beyond any doubt that Cuomo and his aides set out to prevent a timely, full and honest accounting of those deaths. Deep shame on him and them.

The New York Times' discovery of drafted but never-released reports and its interviews with state health officials reveals that, contrary to claims made throughout last year as Cuomo and his aides stonewalled the public, Dr. Howard Zucker and DOH staff didn't need more time to count the deaths. They had a clear sense of the much-higher-than-initially-reported nursing home death toll way back in June — and kept it close to the vest until forced to come clean by a lawsuit.

FOUNDED IN 1887

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# The GOP lets Biden play the long game

WASHINGTON — In a democracy, any serious governing project is also a political project. Presidents who want their achievements to endure know they must create majorities to sustain their visions over time.

FDR did it. Ronald Reagan did it.

Now, Joe Biden is trying to do it.

Political realignments don't happen easily. Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, gifted politicians in their different ways, plausibly hoped they could create coalitions that would outlast them. The achievement eluded both.

Donald Trump never had a popular majority behind him, but he was the Great Disrupter. By shattering old assumptions, he clarified the battlefield for the future.

Trump sped up two trends that began gathering steam in the 1990s: the steady shift of well-educated and professional voters toward the Democratic Party, and the move of white, working-class voters to the GOP. Biden won in 2020 partly because he cut into Trump's working-class margins a bit but largely because he swept increasingly diverse suburban areas that were at the heart of the Democrats' 2018 midterms gains.

This raises two questions: Can Republicans begin to claw back some of the upscale, well-educated voters they lost under Trump? And can Democrats expand on the inroads Biden began to make among voters who didn't attend college?

Democrats hold the initiative, and not just because they control the presidency and narrow congressional majorities. As long as the vast majority of GOP politicians refuse to break with Trump, they will be tethered to

his minority coalition. A comeback will be tough if moderate middle- and upper-middle-class professionals continue to associate the party with Trump, far-right extremists and the Jan. 6. attack on the Capitol.



E.J. DIONNE  
Washington Post

This creates a vulnerability Biden hopes to exploit. It's hard to imagine that any Republican will win more of the white non-college vote than Trump did, so some parts of that electorate are up for grabs. Democrats do not need to carry this group; a shift of five or 10 points among these voters would put the GOP on

its heels.

This is the upshot of a new report by Aliza Astrow, a political analyst for the centrist Democratic group Third Way. The report is both a warning and a promise. As long as Democrats stay weak among non-college voters, she argues, they will have trouble holding, let alone strengthening, their control over the House and Senate. And they will continue to face agonizing fights to win the Electoral College, even with large leads in the national popular vote. But modest shifts toward the Democrats among voters without a college degree would change the game.

Third Way-ers and the Democratic Party's left often feud, so it's worth emphasizing that Astrow's analysis is not rooted in ideology.

The two models she cites of Democrats who succeeded in winning non-college voters in states Trump carried represent different wings of the party: moderate Gov. Roy Cooper in North Carolina and progressive Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio. Both, she said, campaigned on jobs for blue-collar workers, job training and infrastructure. Those who heard Biden's speech

last week will notice something familiar.

Moreover, Astrow is careful to discuss Black and Latino non-college voters, not just whites. While Democrats carried nonwhite voters without a college degree by large margins in the past four presidential elections, the party's share among non-college minority voters has slipped since 2008. (Their performance among non-college whites declined even more.)

Biden recouped some of the party's 2016 losses with these groups — enough to win the key states that gave him his Electoral College victory — but did not hit Obama's 2008 and 2012 levels. As Astrow reports, Obama won 53% of the non-college vote in 2008 and 51% in 2012. Hillary Clinton took 44% in 2016, and Biden bumped the Democrats' share back up to 48% in 2020.

The ongoing debate among pollsters is whether economic policies can really move the numbers among white working-class voters. After all, their ballots for Trump were largely explained by issues related to race, culture and immigration.

But Biden's intuition is that economic questions unite less economically privileged voters across racial lines — and that many non-college voters think the Democrats have stopped talking to them altogether. By addressing their concerns explicitly and sympathetically, as he did last week, Biden hopes first to close this communications gap and then deliver tangible benefits.

There's certainly a case that American politics are now so fluid that sturdy realignments are impossible.

But with Republicans stranded on Trump Island, Biden has an opportunity to hold his party's base and begin poaching the GOP's core voters. He's made no secret of his intentions.

# Liberals just can't handle a Black conservative

CAMDEN, S.C. — The tightrope one must walk when discussing race these days is especially perilous if you happen be Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina.

During his response Wednesday night to President Joe Biden's address to a joint session of Congress, Scott managed to keep his balance. He leveled strong and smart criticisms at Biden's agenda for the next four years.

But you wouldn't know it to read his critics on the left. The only Black Republican in the Senate, Scott was quickly trending as "Uncle Tim" on Twitter, as a tool of white supremacists and as a blind servant of the far right. Liberals just cannot handle a Black conservative.

This, my friends, is (also) what racism looks like in America today.

Let a Black man speak for the GOP; let him defend conservative values that were once considered mainstream; let him challenge the current orthodoxy of systemic racism that pegs whites as oppressors — and he will feel the wrath of those for whom, as Scott said, belief in racism is essential to political power.

The trouble among people who seem to see racism everywhere is that Scott neither sees nor dwells in a Black-and-White world. Life for Scott hasn't been easy. As he said Wednesday, he has experienced the insults to his dignity that other minorities recognize as part and parcel of life in America. He's been followed in stores, he said, and pulled

over for no reason while driving.

As a child growing up in South Carolina, Scott was often angry in school, he said, and nearly failed.



KATHLEEN PARKER  
Washington Post

That he didn't is a credit to his single mother, who "has prayed me through some really tough times," and his grandparents with whom, he, his mother and his brother lived. He spoke of seeing his grandfather read the morning paper each day, only to learn much later that his grandfather couldn't read but was trying to set an example.

In other words, Scott's is the kind of story Americans have always admired — the overcoming of adversity to become what he could not have imagined as a child.

So, what's wrong with Tim Scott? Not one thing except that he's a conservative — and Black. A child could easily recognize the unfairness of such an assessment. Anyone can see that judging Scott by his skin color is the essence of racism. The fact that Republicans admire him does not and should not diminish his accomplishments.

Scott's response to Biden was respectful while also being tough on policies that at other times in our history might have brought a broad segment of Americans to their feet in protest. Yet, we're supposed to sit back and nod at the prospect of \$4 trillion in new spending. Shut the door.

Massive new government programs are often tempting, especially when it comes to things such as infrastructure. Everyone knows that improvements

to roads, bridges and waterways are critical. Everyone wants all children to be well-fed and well-educated. But who pays for free preschool and free community college? Who pays for medical and family leave? Who picks up the higher cost of goods and services when corporations are set to be taxed at higher rates? Even the very wealthiest Americans aren't rich enough to cover Biden's proposed spending spree.

In his rebuttal, Scott based his criticisms on core conservative principles by which he was raised. Yes, of course, Republicans are gratified when a conservative African American comes along because there are so few. But there's no justification for conflating appreciation with White manipulation or the dubious "reward" of responding to the president in prime time, a practice that often ruins a political future.

As Scott said, "It's backwards to fight discrimination with different discrimination."

Thus, the more apt question is: What's wrong with progressives?

An array of debates awaits us. We should have them. But let every person speak without threat of reprisal on the basis of race — slammed as un-woke, guilty of "White grievance," or a traitor to one's race. Those who diminish Scott under the racist rubric that a Black man can't be a conservative for his own good reasons diminish themselves — all of us, really. Worse, they impede the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s unifying goal that we judge a man not by the color of his skin but by the content of his character. Nice work.