



Holgate Group at the Root of Restoration

Association Creates Instructional Video For Dune Planting

Over the past decade the Holgate Taxpayers Association has endeavored to vegetate the sand dunes on Long Beach Island's south end as much as possible, bolstering this natural barricade. As HTA President Rand Pearsall remarked, "We have long recognized the risks associated with a barrier island and that our dune system is the only protection against severe storms."

Following Superstorm Sandy, some Holgate residents noticed most dunes that withstood the storm-riled ocean waves were heavily vegetated. With that in mind, the HTA initiated a dune restoration program and began to plant a variety of grasses, flowers, trees and bushes along beach entrances: native beach plums, bayberries, cedars and grasses, as well as "naturalized" Montauk daisies, milkweed and rugosa roses.

Now the group has taken its years of dune-planting experience and created an instructional video, available on the association website at holgatetaxpayers.org/web/dune-vegetation-project.

"We wanted to share the knowledge and time-proven practices behind our successful dune-planting program to encourage others to help preserve the dunes," said HTA Trustee Denise Brand, who chairs the dune committee.

"We witnessed firsthand the destruction of the dunes during Superstorm Sandy," she added, "and we were amazed that Holgate's dunes with mature and varied vegetation survived much better than dunes that only had dune grass on them."

The effort began in 2015, when

then-president Dan Macone worked with Long Beach Township to get a number of plants to replenish the dunes in Holgate.

"Those plants have flourished and spread over the last decade," said Pearsall. "Since then, Denise has worked with volunteers to add more than 1,300 plants over the last seven years."

Approximately 16 of the 25 beach entrances in Holgate have been planted, plus one bay entrance. The HTA is hoping to plant more, but does need volunteers to water the new plants, and also needs the homes nearest the plantings to allow volunteers to access their water (for which the group would reimburse them). Some of the remaining entrances, meanwhile, are already well vegetated, while a few are too narrow to plant.

In addition, a dune-planting test area is located at the bottom of the large dune on the north and south sides of the Susan Avenue beach access.

"We are very pleased with the success of this effort and invite everyone to see what is possible over several years of planting," the HTA stated.

Brand, her husband, Brian Tierney, and Pearsall provided the content for the new instructional video, with copywriting courtesy of HTA Trustee Art Levy and editing and art direction by Dan Fried of Innovision Media.

As Brand and Pearsall pointed out, this video is for "everyone who spends time at the Jersey Shore and wants to preserve the experience for generations to come. ... While oceanfront homeowners are responsible to plant the dunes behind their houses, there are great planting opportunities along



Supplied Photos

NATURAL BARRIER: (Clockwise from top left) The Holgate Taxpayers Association bolsters the sand dunes on Long Beach Island's south end by planting in permitted locations, including along the beach entrances. A new video created by the HTA explains the dune planting process. Bayberries, Montauk daisies, Rugosa roses, grasses, cedars and junipers are all species that thrive here. The association knows the importance of hardy dunes.

the public-access walkways to the beach. Every little bit helps."

Some oceanfront homeowners, of course, will have purchased their home on LBI after Sandy, and are perhaps unaware of the significance of vegetated dunes; therefore, they are a great audience for the dune-planting video. In addition, Brand and Pearsall pointed out, "some owners may think the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dune grass

is providing sufficient protection." The large dunes where the USACE planted grass after beach replenishment projects are protected by legal easements given to the federal government.

"However, you should be able to plant at the bottom of the dune which adjoins your property," Brand explained. "And if you are fortunate enough to have the original small dune in addition to the large federal

dune, you are able to plant on it.

"The HTA has even planted on one private dune with the permission of the homeowners as a test to prove the plants would take there. This was important because the dune grass had been dying in this area on the west side of the dune, and we didn't want to encourage more planting if the plants didn't take."

Another reason for the video, said

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Pearsall, is that gardening can be a bit daunting for many people — particularly in sand — and the HTA wants to demonstrate how easy and affordable it can be. The video walks viewers through the process, detailing exactly what they need to get started.

In Holgate, where volunteers have been able to water and tend to the dune plantings properly, "we probably have an 85% to 95% success rate," Brand noted. "This rate has improved over the years as we have learned how to best adapt to the dune environment, which does create some challenges."

"While dependent on many factors," she added, "we have seen small bayberry bushes

grow very large and spread significantly in just 10 years." "The HTA has invested approximately \$40,000 in dune planting since 2015. We have benefited from a great partnership with the Reynolds Garden Center nursery in Manahawkin," Pearsall explained. "They have provided good counsel, and a nonprofit rate, which has helped us afford more plants each year."

Long Beach Township, too, has been supportive of the association's efforts, from initially supplying plants after Sandy to allowing the group to plant along the beach accesses.

HTA members and volunteers will continue their work to strengthen the dunes on LBI's south end while sharing this new instructional video — and their knowledge and experience — to help other coastal communities fortify their dunes.

— **Juliet Kaszas-Hoch**