

Restoring Biodiversity in Our Suburban Gardens

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In his book *Bringing Nature Home*, American entomologist and author Douglas Tallamy warns us that “Unless we restore native plants to our suburban ecosystems, the future of biodiversity...is dim.” This should be concerning to all of us. One of the many things that the pandemic revealed to us over the course of the past two years was that even though cities went silent during the lockdowns, wildlife returned and thrived in what had been thought to be “urban wastelands”. In an article published by the Yale School of the Environment in July 2021, author Janet Marinelli writes “There is a growing recognition that cities are key to the future of conservation as the human footprint expands relentlessly around the globe. In fact, researchers are increasingly working with city planners, landscape architects and urban wildlife managers to make cities part of the solution to the global biodiversity crisis.” Here in Guildwood we live in a spectacular remnant of the Carolinian forest, so we are fortunate enough

to have an opportunity to participate in rebuilding the biodiversity of our corner of Toronto. One of the easiest ways for us to do this is to rethink the way we garden. Douglas Tallamy—whose other great contribution to this line of thinking is his website called the “Homegrown National Park”—believes that when we plant imported ornamental shrubs and flowers, we may as well be planting statues for all the good they do for the wildlife around us. *So...what can **you** do to create a healthy habitat in your Guildwood garden?* **Here are some ideas:**

- Add native wildflowers, shrubs & trees to provide the best nutrients and habitat for butterflies, bees, birds and other critters
- Change your spring clean-up practice:
 - Leave stems up until after mid-May to protect native bee larvae
 - Leave the leaves (they make the best organic soil amendment you can get - and it’s free!)

- Change your fall clean-up practice:
 - Leave seed heads up to feed the birds
 - Leave hollow stems up (many native bees overwinter in them)
 - Add leaves to beds – they shelter many butterfly eggs and chrysalises over the winter
- Reduce your lawn size (less mowing and watering)
- Add clover and “bee turf” seeds to the remaining lawn
- Leave old wood in the corners of your garden to provide more nesting sites for native bees
- Leave some clear patches of earth for ground-nesting native bees
- Don’t dig over your soil (this destroys the micro-organisms and delicate ecosystem)
- Include puddling trays for butterflies (a small flat dish like a pie plate placed in the garden and filled with shallow water and a few pebbles)
- Plan for continuous bloom from spring to late fall
- Do not use any chemicals – a healthy garden will balance itself and beneficial insects will deal with the pests

| Host plants for butterflies and moths | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Common Name | Botanical Name | Host Plant For |
| Pearly Everlasting | Anaphalis margaritacea | American Lady, Painted Lady |
| Wild Columbine | Aquilegia canadensis | Columbine Duskwing Butterfly, Columbine Borer Moth |
| Swamp Milkweed | Asclepias incarnata | Monarch Butterfly, Queen Butterfly |
| Common Milkweed | Asclepias syriaca | Monarch Butterfly, Queen Butterfly, Milkweed Tussock Moth |
| Butterfly Milkweed | Asclepias tuberosa | Monarch Butterfly, Queen Butterfly, Milkweed Tussock Moth |
| New Jersey Tea | Ceanothus americana | Mottled Duskywing, Spring Azure |
| Wild Turtlehead | Chelone glabra | Baltimore Checkerspot |
| Red Osier Dogwood | Cornus sericea | Spring & Summer Azures |
| Boneset | Eupatorium perfoliatum | Clymene Moth, Three-Lined Flower Moth, Boneset Borer Moth |
| Spotted Joe Pye Weed | Eutrochium maculatum | Three-Lined Flower Moth, Ruby Tiger Moth |
| Sweet Joe Pye Weed | Eutrochium purpureum | Three-Lined Flower Moth, Ruby Tiger Moth |
| Woodland Sunflower | Helianthus divaricatus | Silvery Checkerspot |
| Wild Lupine | Lupinus perennis | Wild Indigo & Persius Duskywings, Karner Blue, Frosted Elfin, Orange & Clouded Sulphur |
| Wild Bergamot | Monarda fistulosa | Hermit Sphinx Moth, Snout Moth |
| Switch Grass | Panicum virgatum | Tawny-Edged Skipper, Northern Broken Dash |
| Ninebark | Physocarpus opulifolia | Spring & Summer Azures |
| Grey-Headed Coneflower | Ratibida pinnata | Wavy-Lined Emerald Moth, Camouflaged Looper Moth |
| New England Aster | Symphiotrichum novae-angliae | Northern and Pearl Crescent Butterfly, Canadian Sonia Moth, American Lady |
| Large-leaved Aster | Symphiotrichum macrophylla | Silvery Checkerspot, Pearl Crescent |
| Giant Ironweed | Vernonia gigantea | Parthenice Tiger Moth |
| Evening Primrose | Oenothera biennis | Primrose Moth |
| Nannyberry | Viburnum lentago | Spring Azure |
| Pussytoes | Antennaria dioica | American Lady |
| Eastern Redbud | Cercis canadensis | Henry's Elfin |
| Showy Tick Trefoil | Desmodium canadense | Gray Hairstreak |
| Blue False Indigo | Baptisia australis | Wild Indigo Duskywing |
| Wild Indigo | Baptisia tinctoria | Wild Indigo Duskywing |
| Hoary Vervain | Verbena stricta | Baltimore Checkerspot & Common Buckeye |
| Slender Vervain | Verbena simplex | Baltimore Checkerspot & Common Buckeye |
| Monkey Flower | Mimulus ringens | Baltimore Checkerspot |

