

# What's Growing On? The Fletcher Wildlife Garden Newsletter

www.ofnc.ca/fletcher.php

September 2011

## Hibernate? No Way! We're Busier Than Ever!

*We're gathering nuts of our own for next season!*

Things seem to be ramping up the energy level in the garden! If you drop by, you are certain to wonder at all the construction. We're in the process of rebuilding the nursery and creating winter plant zones which will hopefully foil our furry, snacking friends. We're going to be starting a new tool shed to replace the current one as we need more room and a door that actually opens and shuts!



*DSV, the way we like it - neutralised!*

For the BYG, we're hoping to build up a wall with more soil on our

sloping Woodland Walk (anyone have a truck and desire to move rocks??). There might be some tree moving in other beds and some general master planning. Not to worry, though, as the BYG will still and always be the same place beloved by visitors and snacking squirrels.

Our latest two DSV weeding bees were also successes (thank you to all participants!). Bags and bags of twiney, viney nastiness did NOT go to seed and spread even further. Moreover, we tackled some areas very difficult to access due to standing wood matter and along paths.

Now that the leaves are changing colour, we can also spot our other foe, Buckthorn, more easily as like many invasive species it has the temerity not to have leaves that change colours with our seasons. Because they remain a resolute green until they die and drop off, you too can now easily determine if you have those thorny invaders about. If you want to help tackle Buckthorn then talk to our resident guru [Tony Denton](#) and consider joining us one day to saw, hack and lever out this pest!

### Contact Us!

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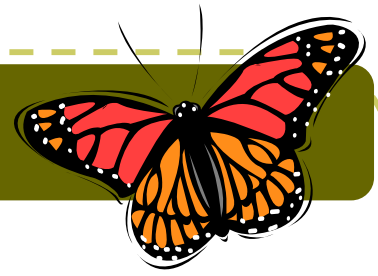
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## Web 2.0, Butterflies and the Changing Face of Communication in the 21st Century



If you haven't already heard (which would be an amazing thing as we're all so *thrilled* we tend to slip the news into every other sentence) FWG is the VERY happy and grateful second-place winner of the Evergreen/FIDO Share Your Care contest. This means that we won funding toward our efforts to create the largest Monarch Butterfly Waystation in Canada. If you haven't heard the news, it is possibly because you aren't part of the Web 2.0 phenomenon.

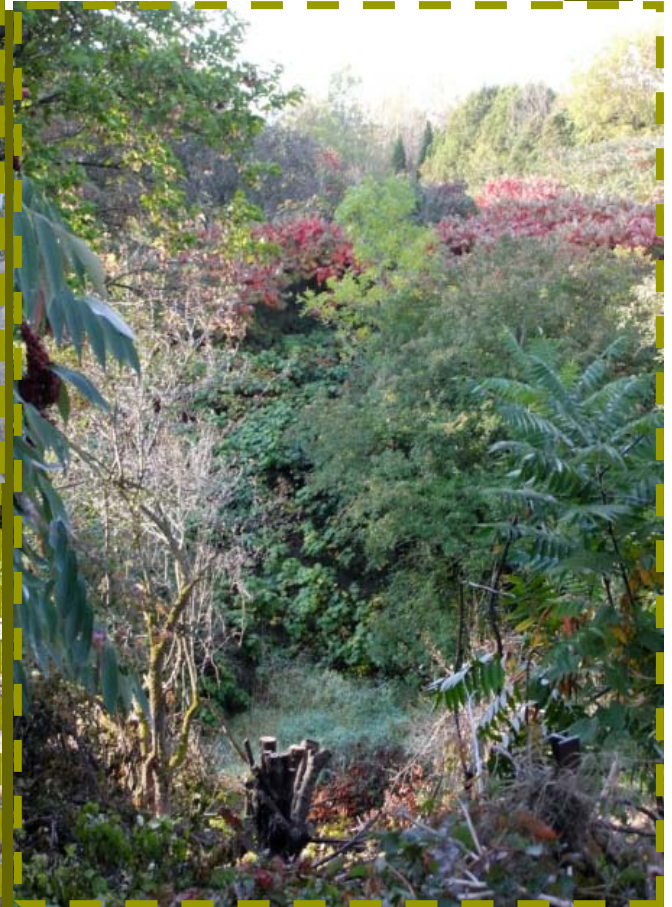
Web 2.0 is a trendy way of referring to the interactive evolution of the web from just browsing to active participating in trading of information. Facebook, Twitter, blogging and active commenting on articles are all part of Web 2.0 and beloved by marketers as a means to gather more, faster and direct information from consumers/participants. The SYC contest was run through the Facebook platform meaning that to vote, you needed a Facebook account. This caused us problems as, like many organisations, we generally have an older fan base who do not maintain a strong online presence - a bit of a problem in what amounted to a popularity contest! However, by the end of the voting period, we had supporters from around the world as friends asked friends, special interest clubs learned of our work and the news spread electronically.

Whether we like the fact that we have to act online as much as on the ground (where the plants are... the things we like to work with!) is irrelevant - it is the new reality of running a volunteer initiative where sharing information is important (on our website) as is reaching out to new volunteers. We do all sort of things now - such as cloud computing and e-newsletters - that make our lives easier. But, at the end of the day we will always focus on our on-the-ground work and people, as these are what matters most. So, bear with us as we learn the ropes of balancing the management and communication of our beloved non-profit in the 21st century!

*FWG uses a lot of 2.0 technology to share information and garner interest in our activities. Here is a listing of some that may be of interest:*

- ✂ **[Tuesday Invasive Species Group at FWG Blog](#)**. This great blog chronicles the activities of our newest volunteer group at FWG, and includes lots of photos of the big difference they are making in the fight against Dog Strangling Vine. The blog also includes observations on DSV such as growth form changes, new information found during literature searches, as well as best practices the group is working out.
- ✂ **[The FWG](#)**. A new photo gallery group started by France where photographers can upload and display their photos of the Fletcher Wildlife Garden.
- ✂ **[The FWG Blog](#)**. Photos, descriptions and inventories of the critters that call FWG home.
- ✂ A **[video](#)** about FWG by Scott Parker of the *Ottawa Citizen*.
- ✂ FWG also has its own Facebook page if you want to find us in **[Facebookland!](#)**

## Fall at FWG!



*Clockwise from top:* The BYG in the morning dew, softened colours but still very much in flower./ Looking down into the ravine after clearing some Buckthorn. Now, the Amur Maples are also causing problems as invaders./ The old shed still stands, but the nursery is gone./ The base of the old nursery before the stones and ground cloth were removed. We're hoping to expand its size as well as critter proof!

## Fall Flowers - Asters and Goldenrods

This is the time of year when goldenrods and asters are at their peak, and there are many native species of both. These wildflowers attract a large variety of insects, providing them with pollen, nectar, and other food they may need to make it through the winter. And bright yellow goldenrods can make your yard look sunny, even on a dull day.

The most common goldenrods are too aggressive for most gardens, but rough-stemmed goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa*) is "well behaved." It tends to grow in compact clumps and has a regular leaf arrangement that makes the plant look very attractive even when it's not blooming. Narrow-leaved goldenrod (*Euthamia graminifolia*) is light and airy with its slender leaves and loose clusters of flowers. Gray goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*) grows well in dry conditions and is shorter than most other goldenrods. If your yard is shady, try zigzag (*Solidago flexicaulis*) or blue-stemmed goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*). Both have small clusters of yellow flowers zigzagging up a main stem that's usually no more than 60-70 cm tall.

Native asters also bloom late into fall, giving your garden colour when most other plants have gone to seed. The rich purple or pink New England asters (*Aster novae-angliae*) are favourites, but if you don't have enough sun try whorled aster (*Aster acuminatus*) or large-leaved aster (*Aster macrophyllus*). The latter forms a carpet of large heart-shaped leaves that act as a good ground cover. Flat-topped aster (*Aster umbellatus*), which does need sun, is very tall, but great if you want to attract butterflies. Heart-leaved aster (*Aster cordifolia*) will grow in sun or shade, is medium in height, and has loose spikes of delicate mauve flowers. For dry areas, upland white aster (*Aster ptarmicoides*), which some classify as a goldenrod, is an excellent choice.

With so many easy-to-grow varieties to choose from, you'll be able to find an aster or goldenrod that's right for your garden. And by planting these species, you may be taking your first step toward gardening for wildlife.

**By Sandy Garland.** For photos and more information: [www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/wildflowers/index\\_e.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/wildflowers/index_e.php) (click on the down arrow under "Latin name" so that all "Aster" and "Solidago" (goldenrod) species are together).

Identifying local asters : [www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/keys/asters/index.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/keys/asters/index.php)

Identifying local goldenrods: [www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/keys/goldenrods/index.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/keys/goldenrods/index.php)



*Solidago caesia*



*Solidago rugosa*



*Aster macrophyllus*

## Fall Garden Prep at Home

I walk around my urban neighbourhood a lot, and I've noticed that most gardens get quite messy at this time of year. Maybe it's because fewer plants are blooming, so we lose interest or maybe we just don't have much time now that summer is over.

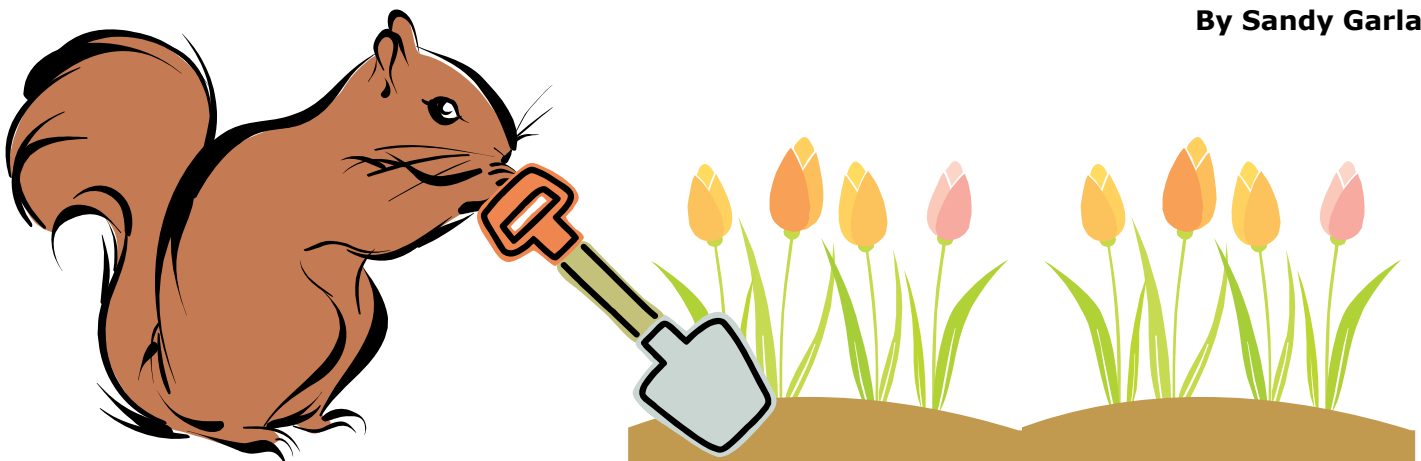
But a few minutes can make a big difference to even the most overgrown garden. The most effective - and quickest - action is trimming the front edge. If you have an edger (a straight blade on the end of a handle), that works best, but an ordinary shovel or even a trowel or clippers will do. Just go along the front edge of your garden and cut off anything that protrudes onto the sidewalk. I guarantee you'll be amazed at the difference.

You can also cut down any stalks without flower heads, or remove fallen over stems. Weeding is a breeze as the unwanted plants grow more slowly.

You don't need to mulch yet - let your trees' leaves do that for you naturally!

Finally, now is the time to pop in new bulbs. Although they are not native species, we plant crocuses and daffodils in our Backyard Garden at the FWG to provide nectar and pollen for early bees and other insects. A piece of chicken wire buried over each group of bulbs keeps squirrels from transplanting them to their own "gardens."

By Sandy Garland



### WANTED: Items FWG Could Use!

The Butterfly Meadow Group is looking for used pool liners for their work. Contact: [dlepagehibou@sympatico.ca](mailto:dlepagehibou@sympatico.ca)

Do you have excess Common Milkweed in your garden you could donate? We need as many plants as we can get to qualify as a Monarch Waystation!

We can always use 3.5- or 4-inch square pots without any cracks. Anything larger or smaller doesn't fit our trays, nor does anything circular. We also like large round pots, the kind that come with shrubs or very big perennials. Just drop them off by the nursery!

## Going Native in Your Own Backyard

*An exposé by FWG Volunteer Barbara Riley, an avid hill trekker, ardent cyclist and maintainer of the BYG Butterfly Bed.*



©Clotilde Harrahan

*Backyard beauty: Joe-Pye Weed, Monarda and Yarrow*

Adding “native plants” to the garden is a conscious act of environmental commitment. It requires an interest in the intimate relationship between the plants and the wildlife they sustain. It takes courage for those of us whose connection to native plants has been limited to weeding them out of the garden.

And, crucially, it takes an understanding attitude to others in the household whose immediate reaction to the idea may be negative: “You want to plant weeds in the garden?”

However, with a little knowledge

and the right approach, it is possible to reassure the doubters and get them onside.

Luckily, I was introduced to native plants at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, a volunteer project that aims to offset habitat loss and the decline of plant and animal species by encouraging people to create or restore natural landscapes on their own property. I volunteer in the Backyard Garden - a showpiece for native plants that can add colour and beauty to one’s garden while making it more friendly to bees, butterflies, chipmunks and other wildlife.

Armed with information and some volunteer experience at FWG, I broached the idea of adding native plants to the garden with the rest of my household. Naturally, there were some concerns:

- ✂ “Not goldenrod – I’m allergic to it.” A common error as people tend to confuse goldenrod with ragweed, which blooms at the same time and often grows in the same place as goldenrod. Goldenrod’s a lovely fall bloomer, beloved of birds, bees, and other beneficial insects.
- ✂ “The swamp milkweed has yellow aphids – they’ll attack everything else in the garden!” True, this lovely plant with tiny, fragrant pinky-purple flowers often supports crowds of yellow aphids, but they are not interested in anything else (unless it’s another milkweed). I like the advice of one experienced gardener: “The best way to admire my swamp milkweed is to stand back about eight feet and take my glasses off.”
- ✂ “Why aren’t they blooming yet?” Native plants take their time growing good roots so they

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# Monarch Waystation Project

Meetings of the steering committee are underway, as is planning and enthusiasm for all the work that will be done. We'll be growing lots of extra plants and buying some larger specimens. Thank you to all those who have provided Common Milkweed, which is being put in the ground as it comes in! But our focus isn't just what we can plant but what we can do - we are looking at how our work can fit into the [North American Monarch Conservation Plan](#) and what our goals as an organization should be. We're keeping you posted through our webpage, [www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/projects/MonarchWaystation/index.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/projects/MonarchWaystation/index.php),



where you'll also see a list of other waystations in Ottawa and notes on plants that we've actually seen Monarchs on. And see them we do - one fluttered through the BYG just the other day and caused quite a stir among the Friday volunteer group as we followed its movements enthusiastically!

*(Continued from page 6)*

may not produce flowers the first year. But, when the summer is hot and dry, they will do better, needing less water than cultivated plants because, being native, they are used to local conditions.

✂ "They're spreading everywhere." Often true, as native plants feel right at home in your garden, unlike an exotic import that needs babying. But this is an opportunity to give some - especially the plants that attract pollinators - to friends and neighbours, plant them in an empty lot or along a roadway - and help create a more wildlife-friendly city!

The most important step is to make sure that everyone in the household knows why it makes sense to grow native plants and has a stake in choosing them. Take them around the Backyard Garden at FWG; let them read the info available in print and online; share your own backyard discoveries, such as finding a Monarch caterpillar on the swamp milkweed.

*Happy wildlife gardening!*

## Activity: Moving the Birdfeeder!



The BYG has been feeder-less most of this summer due to contemplations on how best to foil our leaping squirrel friends. A dwarf Colorado Blue Spruce provided a popular jumping off point for the furry daredevils, and we hope the new post location is just far enough away to dissuade. Moving the birdfeeder also meant changing the trail sign to be more visible.

The "guys" had a good time digging those holes and banging about!

## Nature Notes: In Bloom

When it rains in fall, mushrooms appear, including these ever so tiny *Mycena* species that grow on trees by the hundreds but are barely visible to the naked eye unless you look closely for them. They are exquisite but difficult to photograph well.



## Nature Notes: Bug of the Month



This spittlebug (Cercopidae) was hanging out in the Butterfly Meadow. While they can be pests, they rarely are present in sufficient numbers to damage a plant. Spittlebugs produce a liquid secretion and transform it into bubbles by moving or pumping their bodies. This foam can be seen on plants more readily than the insects themselves! The foam has multiple duties - a place to hide and a place to insulate against temperature extremes.

## Nature Notes: Bird of the Month



This female Northern Cardinal isn't as showy as her male companion but lovely nonetheless. Ironically, these birds are mostly found in the southern section of Canada! They eat grains, fruit and insects and are one of the most easily recognized bird species for the beginning birders among us, especially as the winter colours come out more strongly!

## Knowledge Note: Rain Gardens

In autumn, thoughts turn to falling leaves and the impending falling of snow, but it is also the right time of year to begin plotting for next spring when rain will be dropping from the sky. We are all familiar with water conservation methods like rain barrels and refraining from irrigation. To combat erosion, protecting ground beneath downspout areas with rocks or an extending hose attachment are some options, but another is to construct a rain garden. Preventing excess water runoff helps the stormwater system keep from overflowing during storm events – and in many places the sewer and storm system share the same pipes leading to unsavoury releases into our rivers. Rain gardens are depressed areas in a yard where downspout water is directed – a bit like a very shallow, landscaped ditch! They are planted with species that can tolerate wet roots, and provide a location to hold water until it seeps into the ground naturally. Before you imagine mini-ponds, the reality is more like soggy soil after a storm. Native species that are ideal for this sort of use include Joe-Pye Weed, Swamp Milkweed and Blue Flag Iris. Rain gardens are just another tool we have to help Mother Nature while beautifying our home environment!



*Above: Two example rain gardens. Left to right: Blue Flag Iris, Joe-Pye Weed, Swamp Milkweed (all three grow in the wet bed in our Backyard Garden!)*