



Ardsley Cross Pollination News

November 2024 - The Annual Monarch Butterfly Edition



2022 & 2023

Mayor Kaboolian Designates November as "Monarch Butterfly Month" in the Village of Ardsley [Click here to view the Proclamation designating November as "Monarch Butterfly Month" in the Village of Ardsley.](#)

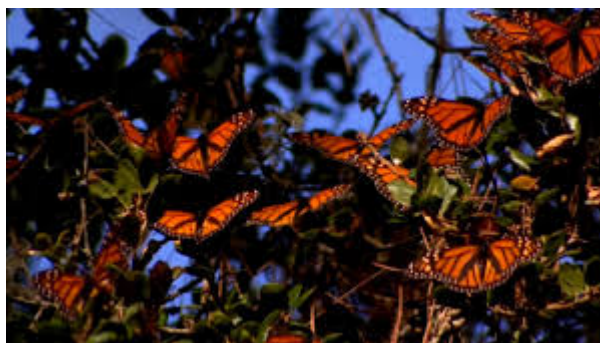
In early October I was in one of our public pollinator gardens at Hart's Brook Park and Preserve when I was honored with a visit from a monarch butterfly. Any visit by a monarch is special, but this one was poignant because it is only the second monarch I've seen this season. That's alarming.

This butterfly was fueling up in the garden on the nectar we supply through her/his favorite fall blooming natives, including blue mistflower, asters, goldenrods and annuals such as cosmos and zinnias. My monarch friend is now on his/her incredible journey of up to 3,000 miles to Mexico. One delicate butterfly flies all that way over the span of a few months to join other monarchs at their overwintering site in early November. Absolutely amazing and awe inspiring.

As the butterfly and I shared the garden space together while I watered the plants I thought about what it would mean to lose such an amazing creature. Sadly, we are close to that outcome for eastern migratory monarch butterflies. Anecdotal observation from local conservationists, gardeners, and ecologists echo my own experience in the Ardsley area this summer: there were fewer monarchs in the gardens (true of all pollinators as well). This year's monarch watch and counts have brought back alarming news. The [2023-2024 overwintering number of eastern migratory monarch butterflies dropped by 59%](#) from the previous year. We'll get the scientific assessment of monarch populations in Mexico this winter, but I suspect that it will be alarming.

In addition to loss of habitat (milkweeds and nectar plants along the migratory path), weather plays an important role in determining migrating monarch populations. A spring/summer that is too wet or dry has an effect, as do tough weather conditions as monarchs migrate. Hurricane Helene devastated a wide area that included the monarch migratory flight path.

There are [monarch butterflies elsewhere in the world](#) but only the North American monarchs migrate such a long distance, which makes our monarchs unique and incredibly special. There is a [current debate about whether we are losing monarchs overall at an alarming rate or whether we are losing the monarchs that migrate](#) at an alarming rate. Some scientists think that monarchs are failing to migrate due to climate change, a parasitic infection, planting non-native milkweed, and people raising monarchs and releasing them.



There is an important role for you to play in your yards to support these beloved creatures. I have learned over these years that too much information and choice can be overwhelming and lead to inaction. So, because we are in a struggle to save our migrating monarchs, I am going to focus on just a few simple steps and choices you can make to do your part. Everything helps, no matter how small. ***Just choose one thing. That's easy and doable, right?***

Here are the simple steps you can take:

- **Plant a few native plants in your existing gardens, shrub beds, or plant containers for monarchs** - I'll specify which ones after the events section of the newsletter to make this easy.
- **Don't prophylactically use pesticides - even the 'natural' ones.** Before choosing pesticides as a solution, use manual methods. Pesticides kill monarchs and other pollinators. They should be the option of last resort (if an option at all) and, if used, used in an extremely targeted and limited fashion.
- **Support monarchs through donating to or participating in the many monarch support and research non-profits.** Just do an internet search on 'best organizations that support monarchs'. Organizations such as the National Wildlife Federation (who sponsors the Mayors Monarch Pledge) and the Xerces Society are well known organizations fighting for monarchs.
- **Never raise monarchs in captivity and then release them, and never grow non-native milkweed.** Both actions are well meaning but actually harm migrating monarch populations. There is a deadly parasite that affects monarchs and it can be spread through non-native milkweed. Additionally, non-native milkweed blooms longer which can lure monarchs to stay rather than migrate. Monarchs raised in captivity are weaker than their wild brethren and are less likely to migrate. Keep monarchs wild.

And here's the good news. Any of the steps you take above will not only help monarchs, but every pollinator and bird that visits your yard.

UPCOMING EVENTS

	Lessons Learned from 100 Garden Consultations - webinar. Wednesday, November 6, 7:30 pm Join Carol Sommerfield, chair of the Ardsley Pollinator Pathway, as she highlights key lessons learned after providing 100 free native garden consultations. Get a head start on success by avoiding these common mistakes and false starts. Click here to register.
	Free Native Plant Seed Event! Sunday, November 10, 2 pm - 4pm at the Bedford Hills Community House, 74 Main Street, Bedford Hills. Get free native plant seeds and participate in the seed swap if you have your own seeds to spare. Hosted by Healthy Yards/Westchester Pollinators.
	Ardsley Invasive Vine Cutting along the South County Trailway, Sunday, November 17, 10 am to noon. Let's work to tame invasive vines along the trailway near Ardsley. Cleared areas will enable the planting of pollinator gardens and native trees. Let's make a difference together! Register here.
	Invasive Species Management, November 18, 10 am to 1 pm at the Westchester County Center Interested in taking action to fight invasive plants? Join Planting Westchester and invasive plant experts to learn about invasives, volunteer programs to manage invasives, and join an actual vine lopping event at the end. Please register here: https://arcg.is/14eKKv.



Greening Your Home: An environmental informational panel **Thursday, November 21, 7 pm at Woodlands Community Temple, 50 Worthington Road, Greenburgh**

Concerned about climate change? Wondering what YOU can do to address climate change and other environmental concerns? There are actions, big and small, that each of us can do to personally address climate change and make our homes more sustainable.

Come hear a panel of experts from Sustainable Westchester, Ardsley Pollinator Pathway, Consumer Reports, and NY State Master Teachers discuss how we can make a difference. You'll hear about energy audits and solar panels. Energy efficient appliances and electric cars. Pollinator and vegetable gardens. Green cleaners and plastic alternatives.

Registration required. For more information and to register [click here.](#)



Beauty for the Bees - Easy Jump Start for a Pollinator Garden - webinar. **Wednesday, December 4, 7:30 pm**

Mai Mai Margules, lead at the Tarrytown Pollinator Pathway and designer of the public pollinator pathway gardens and containers in Tarrytown, will show you how easy it is to get started with a fool-proof pollinator garden. Tips and tricks, carefree and easy plants, how to source plants, and easy design tips will be offered. [Click here to register.](#)



Landscaping with Native Plants and Shrubs: Easy AND Beautiful Combinations for Your Yard! **Wednesday, January 8, 2025, 7:30 pm via Zoom**

Get an update on Kathy Ever's "rewilding" efforts and hear about great native plant/shrub combinations that work well in Westchester! Specific and useful advice for landscaping with natives will be provided. It doesn't have to be complicated - everyone can do something to support pollinators and birds.

[Click here](#) to register.



Creating Your Pollinator Garden Workshop Series Monthly, January 18, February 15 and March 15, 10 am - noon

Join us for three free and in-person workshops (January 18, February 15, and March 15, 10 am - 12 pm) to help you start or expand a garden to attract and support pollinators and birds. These workshops will get you ready to plant your gardens in the spring of 2025. [Click here](#) to learn more and register for the event. Attend one or all of them. Limited to 25 participants each.

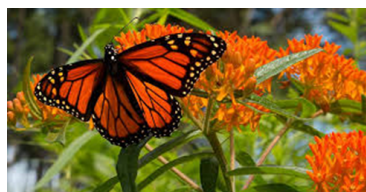
Be a Host with the Most Create Your Own Monarch Cafe

Supply one or more of these great native comfort foods in summer and fall for breeding and migrating monarchs. I promise these plants are super easy to add to an existing garden, tuck in a shrub bed, or plant in a container on your deck. All menu items are very deer resistant, look great, and are not fussy.

Summer Menu

*For Sun (5 hours or more a day) - ** indicates it will also tolerate part shade*

Monarch Kid's Menu: Butterfly Milkweed



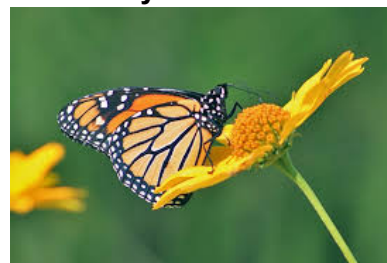
Sun and average to dry soil. 2 ft tall, orange flowers in summer and great fuzzy milkweed pods in the fall. Well behaved and yummy for the monarch kids (and adults)!

Monarch Kids's Menu: Swamp (Rose) Milkweed



Sun and average to moist soil, 3-4 ft tall, pink flowers in summer and great fuzzy milkweed pods in the fall. Well behaved and delicious for the monarch kids (and adults)!

Oxeye Sunflower



Super easy dish: Yellow daisy-like blooms all summer, 3-6 ft tall, not fussy about soil. A joyful dish.

Mountain Mints**



This dish comes in [several variations](#), some friskier than others but all pollinator magnets. There is a mountain mint for your cafe! Sun, white blooms summer into fall.

Culver's Root**



Beautiful vertical interest for sun/partial sun. Four to five feet tall with white flower spikes in summer. Easy!

Wild Bergamot**



A delicious beauty at up to 5 feet tall. Lavender/pink flowers during summer. Easy. A signature dish for any monarch garden.

Foxglove Beardtongue**



Delicious for all pollinators with great fall color as an added spice. White blooms in early summer (just when the monarchs are arriving and hungry), 2-3 feet tall. Tough.

Anise Hyssop**



So easy and a pollinator customer favorite. Plenty of nectar to feed a crowd and a great scent for the human customers too. Two to four feet tall. Purple to lavender flowers bloom summer into early fall. There is a stately endangered (in NY) yellow variety that tops at 6+ feet.

Obedient Plant**



Beautiful blooms summer into fall. Comes in white or pink and though often 3-4 feet tall there are cultivars that are shorter. This one loves average to moist soil but can take intermittent dry conditions too. A little frisky but easy to control. Give the leftovers to your friends.

If you don't have deer pressure also consider **Purple Coneflower**, **Black-eyed Susans**, and **Blazing Stars**.

Late Summer/Fall Menu

For Sun (5 hours or more a day) - ** indicates it will also tolerate part shade

Blue Mistflower**



This is a signature monarch dish. They love this plant and you will too. So easy. One to two feet tall (generally) with a spreading habit. Also forms a nice groundcover. Blooms September/October with an abundance of blue flowers. Prefers average to moist soil, but it can take dry spells too.

New York Ironweed



Do you want to make a tall menu statement? Then go for this New York dish! Six to eight feet tall, with erect stems that will not flop. Purple blooms in late August through September. Nice winter interest too. Average soil but can tolerate moist and dry too.

Goldenrods!!!!**



The easiest dish to prepare and there is a goldenrod for every garden situation, from very short to very tall, from sun to shade. This plant is so incredibly important. You can't have enough. And it is so easy. For some suggestions [click here](#). Stay away from super frisky Canada Goldenrod unless you have lots of room.

Asters!!!**



Like goldenrods, there is a native aster for every garden situation. Monarchs go nuts for this dish that is served September through November - true comfort food. Check out [this site](#) and [this site](#) for some good garden aster choices.

Joe Pye Weeds**



Super easy and a monarch favorite. There are a couple of straight species and cultivars, giving you choice for your garden conditions. Though tall (5-6+ feet) 'Little Joe', is a shorter cultivar. [Check out some varieties here](#). Lavender/purple blooms end of summer into early fall.

Woodland Sunflower**



Got part shade? Then this is a great solution. Four to six feet tall this sunflower blooms late summer into fall. Easy

White Snakeroot**



Like a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for monarchs - such an easy and delicious comfort food. A plant that asks for nothing and thrives anywhere. No, it is not a weed! It is a powerhouse pollinator plant. White flowers in autumn, it thrives in sun to shade, dry to moist soil. Three feet tall and a prolific self-seeder.

Add some annuals for dessert: Cosmos, Mexican sunflower, tall marigolds, and zinnias.

Where to get the ingredients for your Monarch Cafe

A good dish starts with healthy, organic ingredients. There are many choices for purchasing the above plants. Please, make sure that the plants you purchase are [neonic](#) free (a deadly systemic pesticide affecting pollinators and birds that last for years in all parts of inoculated plants, including the nectar and pollen).

Most of the plants listed above are easily available and common. Make sure you purchase native varieties.

Local Retail Sources:

- [Rosedale Nursery](#) (make sure your purchase is neonic free - ask)
- [Carlson's Nursery](#) (ditto as with the above)
- Big Box Stores (again, make sure the plants are neonic free)

If you work with a landscaper s/he can purchase native plants at [Prospero Nursery](#) or [Hardscrabble Farm](#), both are wholesalers to the trade. Make sure to specify that the plants must be neonic free and native. These companies have some suppliers that promise their plants are insecticide free. Sadly, most of their suppliers use systemic pesticides.

Online Retail Sources:

- [Prairie Moon Nursery](#) (all plants and seed are neonic free)
- [Prairie Nursery](#) (all plants and seeds are neonic free)
- [The Pollen Nation](#) (neonic free and inexpensive but you must buy a minimum quantity for plants and orders)

For a complete list of local and online vendors that supply these plants [click here](#).

For a full menu of Monarch favorite plant dishes, see the book *100 Plants to Feed the Monarch* by The Xerces Society.

ACCESS PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS AND INFO SESSIONS



Previous Newsletters and information, recordings, references and presentations from our monthly get togethers are available. Just [click here](#).

Thank you for all you are doing to support our endangered pollinators and ecosystem! Please feel free to forward this newsletter to other interested (or potentially interested) people. Let's grow the pathway!

The Ardsley Pollinator Pathway Team: *Ruchi Agarwal, Rebecca Arkin, Linda Azif, Linda Caldwell, Kathy Evers, Sofia Haber, Julie Larkin, Cynthis Lettiere, Jen Nordhem, Jen Sanchez, Carol Sommerfield (Chair)*

Visit our [Ardsley Pollinator Pathway website](#) for inspiration and how-to guides.

If this email was forwarded to you, [visit our site](#) to subscribe to our newsletter or add your garden to our map. To unsubscribe, [email us](#) with "unsubscribe" as the email subject.

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