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Pollinated Pathways™




After waiting out the winter, the individual Monarch Butterflies head part of the way back north to warmer climes. They only travel a few hundred miles when they stop, mate and

lay eggs on milkweed plant, and then they die. In just a few days the eggs hatch into brilliantly striped caterpillars of black, gold and white. These monarch larvae consume vast amounts of milkweed before forming a chrysalis and transforming into adult butterflies.

by John H. Vargo, *Publisher* and Bob Walters, *retired Director of the Groundwork's Science Barge as well as Director of the Beczak Environmental Education Center*

At this point in the cycle, the new butterflies take to the skies again and fly another few hundred miles north before finding another patch of milkweed and repeating the process. It might take the monarchs as many as four to five generations to complete the journey all the way back up to Canada!

Here is a cause that everyone can participate in that offers a multitude of satisfactory benefits to individuals, boat clubs, marinas and others interested in saving the Monarch Butterfly and other pollinators.

As you can see Milkweed and Monarch Butterflies go hand in glove together.

The Monarch Butterfly in particular and many pollinators in general, such as bees, insects, and birds are in serious trouble! Specifically from loss of habitat and the overuse of pesticides and herbicides.

There are a huge and growing number of public and private organizations that are working to protect and expand the habitat of the Monarch Butterfly. These include government agencies and universities. They all have the same goal in mind, save the monarch butterfly! Interestingly enough the other pollinators, birds, insects, bees etc. also benefit from these efforts!

Monarch Butterflies travel north and south on an annual basis. (Many travel 3000 miles) Their are specific routes throughout the United States that these butterflies take with a destination of southwestern Mexico as their overwintering location. The colorful insect's migration across the North American continent is one of the greatest natural events on Earth.

The cover photo and lead story in this issue brings out a very important effort in this regard, recognized by Mayor Spano of Yonkers and his administration. The day lighting of Larkin Plaza and the subsequent replanting along the urban river called the Sawmill is a shining example of what can be done. In Yonkers alone there are some wonderful examples of locations where these efforts have helped the Monarch. They are the Beczak Environmental Education Center, Pressley Memorial Church of God in Christ, Inc.,

The eastern pathway is specific to the Hudson River and the northeastern portion of the United States. Our Pollinated Pathway, that we all live in, has a problem that must be addressed if the Monarch Butterfly is to survive. That problem is lack of milkweed along the route that the butterflies take.

The Yonkers Paddle and Canoe Club, Lenoir Preserve and many others.

Monarch Butterflies will drink the nectar of other flowers and plants, but cannot survive without laying their eggs on the underside of the milkweed leaf.

The point that we are making here by focusing on the Monarch Butterfly is not that there is a lack of property or locations that can grow milkweed as well as other wild flowers that support pollinators, but that, at the moment good hearted people are completely unaware that the problem even exists.

As the overuse of pesticides, weed wackers, clean landscapes, and generally treating the milkweed as a weed, overpowered the distribution of milkweeds, the Monarch Butterfly has dropped in numbers dramatically as milkweed has decreased drastically!

The concept of creating a common denominator, Pollinated Pathways, with Boating On The Hudson is perfect as a campaign in our Hudson River distribution area.

While the Monarch Butterfly flies straight through from its summer locations in the United States to central Mexico during August and September, it does not do that on its return to the United States and Canada in the spring from Mexico. This return flight back north is something else again!

Lets hope that within a few short years, legislation, and attitudes can be changed and the Monarch Butterfly and other pollinators will come back in numbers that will support the future of our planet.

IT CANNOT BE MENTIONED ENOUGH WITHOUT THE MILKWEED PLANT THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY CANNOT SURVIVE.

Pollinated Pathways™



City of Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano receiving Pollinator Plaque from Filipine Hoogland of Healthy Yards, Westchester, NY.

by **John H. Vargo, Publisher**

Here is a cause that everyone can participate in that provides a multitude of satisfactory benefits to both individuals, boat clubs, marinas and others interested in saving the Monarch Butterfly and other pollinators.

In April 2018 I did a story on arguably the most dramatic changes of a population center on the Hudson River!

The makeover of Larkin Plaza in Downtown Yonkers from a parking lot to a beautiful, living-breathing park, with an urban river running through it, in my opinion, was total and complete. It changed the attitudes of real estate investors, business and others who may, or may not want to move into Yonkers. However complete is never complete when nature is involved.

It took Yonkers thirty plus years to get to where it is today, as well as a dedicated Mayor Spano to see that the "return on investment" was as good as it has proven out to be. (Mayor Spano is in his third term as Mayor of Yonkers)

In 2016 after the first two sections of Van Der Donck Park, (what used to be called Larkin Plaza) were completed, Mayor Spano and the Yonkers councilman and women realized that in order to improve what had been created a contract for maintaining the trees, flowers and shrubs in the newly built park was required.

A bid was placed and fortunately for the City of Yonkers a very unique and dynamic individual, Myra Marsocci and her company "Shades of Green" was the winning bidder.

Myra was awarded the contract in late May of 2017, after the growing season was well under way, and immediately had to reassess as conditions in the gardens had deteriorated quickly since its completion three years prior. Invasive species were dominating the gardens, the plants that were still left were starving for water, the gardens were being used as makeshift shelters, and the noise of new construction drowned out the calming sound of the river washing over the rocks. But Myra was not deterred by this and instead went to work, trusted the process and engaged with city parks, police, the BID, and the public who were all eager to support and assist. Myra and her team, studied what was there in terms of plants, trees, and shrubs and decided this required a plan! Myra knew that in order to save the gardens and help realize the Mayor's vision she would have to start with removing invasive species and improve the soil in order to replace many flowering perennials and annuals that had been lost. She also realized that although this improvement would take more than one season to complete some immediate changes to build community support was necessary.

The first part of the plan was establishing the fact that Van Der Donck Park that stretched from almost the edge of the Hudson River back a quarter mile east into the center of Yonkers was, in affect, a

series of gigantic planters. Myra had experience with maintaining seasonal planters in the City of Peekskill for 10 years using organic methods. That was great preparation for understanding good soil and the right plant choices could help these gardens thrive in their urban setting! No artificial supplements were needed and it could be done within maintenance budget. Once she and her team realized that, they decided working from the ground up was the only way to establish the plants, trees, shrubs and other details into the picture that Myra and the City of Yonkers had envisioned.

Everything was growing from a base of Concrete! Because of this, the soil that had originally been placed in areas along the Saw Mill River's Van Der Danck Park was not stable enough to grow the plants that Myra envisioned could be grown. (Myra found that maintenance and materials budget are always a consideration in sustainability terms and for the City of Yonkers it is a priority to be "green").

Ralph Padilla, city arborist and accredited organic land care professional, ordered a unique stabilizer to the soil called Biochar, and provided freshly chipped hardwood mulch from tree pruning done in other areas of the city. These products

combined with a pelletized kelp would naturally clean up environmental toxins and create a base to sustain new plantings. This combination of materials had the balance necessary to hold water, and provide all the benefits that were required to support Myra's plans.

In addition the Yonkers Parks Department provided a large amount of annuals from their greenhouses that really showed the public that this park's improvement in the first year that Myra had the contract, so much so, that by October the City decided to extend the contract for another year with Myra and Shades of Green. Now Myra had all winter to plan what to

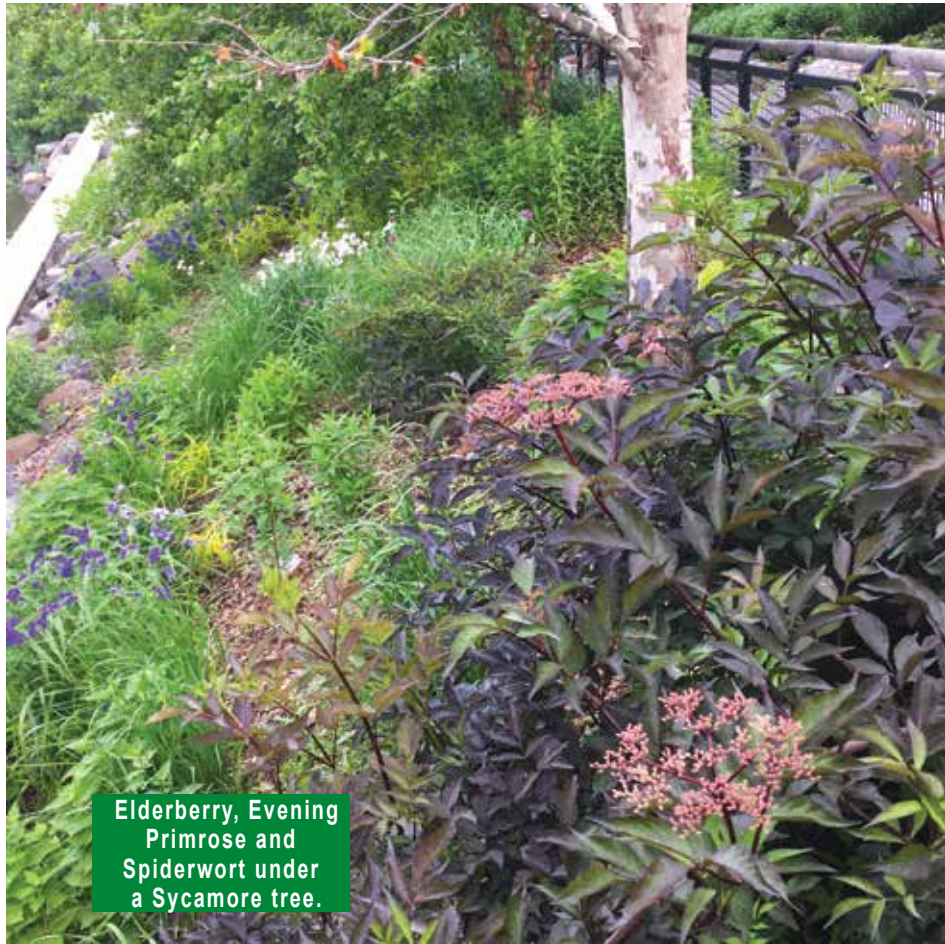


Danielle Ripp, Rebecca Dymes, Myra Marsocci and Andrea Good, The Shades of Green Team

plant, and where, for early spring of 2018.

Myra Marsocci is an organic gardener. She is always thinking of her plants, trees and shrubs in a natural environment without being treated with chemicals! This park is anything but natural, as it is concrete everywhere! Never the less, by looking at the entire park as a giant planter, Myra decided that seasonal flowers would be needed to create an attraction for visitors to the park; So in the Spring of 2018 she would plant hundreds of Marigolds and Salvia, Native perennials, and butterfly weed sprouts!

Marigolds are not only crowd favorite but also a major attractor of pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and pollinators. As the Marigolds began to sprout the public became enthused as to what was happening in their park. Many visitors were taking photos of themselves and their loved ones with the colorful flowers and well maintained landscape as background. This in turn gave Myra and here team the enthusiasm to continuously



Elderberry, Evening Primrose and Spiderwort under a Sycamore tree.

need to have food, shelter and a clean environment! Seasonal flowers and healthy soil provide actually help clean up pollution in a beautiful way. We don't need acres of land to improve our environment we can create habitats in hostile environments with pockets of planters within our cities, river fronts, rooftops, railroads, towns, and neighborhoods for pollinators to visit and fuel up for their journey!

We have to understand the function of what the general public thinks of as "weeds", because they may not be weeds at all, but a major player in the complete eco system we live in! Some of our so called "weeds" are a major supporter of the pollinators that are so important to our daily being. Fruits, vegetables, certain trees, many kinds of plants that live symbiotically with these pollinators will be completely wiped out of our lives because of the loss of habitat and use of chemicals.

By October of 2018 and the second year of Myra's contract a tremendous improvement in the beauty of the Park was evident in the multitude of birds, bees, insects and most importantly butterflies, especially Monarch Butterflies, was evident. Black eyed Susans were seen everywhere and

improve the entire park by dedicating sections of the gardens for butterfly habitat, encouraging birds to feed on the seed heads there by spreading flowers around the gardens. Nothing is simple or stays the same as you try to grow things so by providing more opportunities for nature to thrive on its own we can sustain our gardens with less resources.

Myra's nightmare is the constant polluting of the river and park. There is a staggering amount of plastic that gets dropped, blown and washed in from all the visitors to the park! The polluted ground and water creates an environment that favors invasive species such as Black Alder. This intrusive plant, as well as many others, quickly outpace and can be found was growing up and down the shores of this urban river, the Sawmill River. But within the park, it is being controlled. Even in hard to access areas Myra's team is able to be effective by using timing to their advantage. By Cutting the Alders down, and smothering the stumps in the heat of summer, and at low tide, Myra avoided the use of herbicides at the waters edge. This is what she did and today, what was begun in 2018 in this regard is evident in the lack of Black Alder's along the banks of the Sawmill within the park.

Myra believes not only in organic gardening but the wide use of Perennials in her plantings. She feels that the "chemical, sterile, and limited diversity" approach to landscaping, as we know it today, has to change for a variety of reasons.

Myra believes that many flowering plants are disregarded as unusual or extravagant or not maintainable, when in fact they play a major roll in our food system. A sequence of flowers berries and seeds throughout the year are necessary to support the life of pollinators who in turn support our life. Our pollinators

this in turn led to an increase in gold finches drinking the nectar that these plants produced. I asked Myra what was the general attitude of the public who visited the park and she said, "There seems to be a spirit of happiness, people wanting to help, of joy to be amongst the plantings!"

For the spring of 2019 a plan was put in place to use perennials and annuals in such a manner that something was always blooming. This provided a living, breathing, ever changing tableau of color, scents, and beauty that was the original design intent for this Park. Highlights of the year were the hundreds of "Big Smile Tulips" that burst in full yellow color in early spring and "not so dwarf" sunflowers in summer of 2019! The reaction by visitors is tremendous, now people are coming to the park to see what's blooming, taking selfies, and asking how to get involved. Encouraged Myra and her team, called their friends at HealthyYards, a unique environmental group, to invite them to see what was happening in the park. They were so impressed that they contacted Mayor Spano to recognize the daylighting gardens as meriting national recognition. HealthyYards of Westchester was formed to educate the public about the harmful effects that landscape chemicals are having on our environment and they are helping the public change their home landscape practices by getting people on the pollinator pathway.

Mayor Spano on right and Filipine Hoogland from Healthy Yards of Westchester, with National Pollinator Pathway award.

The reason for the recognition was that the City of Yonkers followed the guidelines Pollinator Pathways national mandate of four basic principals:

1. No use of synthetic chemical pesticides or herbicides
2. Removal of invasive species



'Big Smile' tulips in bloom.

3. Use of native plants
4. Planting a succession of flowering plants that bloom throughout the season.

Healthy Yards of Westchester is but one organization amongst hundreds that have been formed to help protect the Monarch Butterfly and other pollinators!

Interestingly enough Monarch Joint Venture.org is a website that is partnering to conserve the Monarch Butterfly migration, nationwide. MonarchJointventure.org has listed over 80 organizations on their website including Federal and State agencies, governmental organizations, business and academic programs across the United States.

Boating On The Hudson & Beyond magazine is a 30-year-old regional publication with its routes in recreational boating! Most importantly as we matured we realized that the Hudson River Valley, lakes locally, and upstate, as well as the canals, are all integrated environmentally, into one cohesive system!

Pollinated Pathways and PollinatedPathways.com are one and the same, supporting Boating On The Hudson & Beyond Magazine, and promoting the Northeast corridor of the United States and the Monarch Butterfly and its mainstay milkweed.

Pollinated Pathways will support and include any organization, Federal, State, and local governments, private organizations, and businesses that are willing to help save our Northeast Pollinated Pathway and its pollinators such as Monarch Butterfly's, bees, birds and other insects.

We are truly fortunate to have as a leader Mr. Bob Walters who has a lifetime of experience and credits with environmental organizations, all under one name, Pollinated Pathways supporting our goals and the work of others in saving the Monarch Butterfly and other pollinators