

CROSS POLLINATION

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners



Oct.
2017



Monarch Awards 2017 Winner: Amy Taylor's Garden of Delights

[Hamilton's 2017 Monarch Awards](#) winner, Amy Taylor has been gardening for most of her adult life. But she began growing mainly medicinal herbs in pots because she didn't have an actual garden space. Amy and her husband Mick moved to Hamilton from Toronto 10 years ago (encouraged by the escarpment and the Greenbelt around the city), and they brought more than 140 plants with them.

Amy talks with passion about the flowers in her garden, including the likes of bloodroot, coltsfoot, buddleja, the red-flowering crab apple tree, the milkweed, goldenrod, echinacea, the white-then-purple obedient plant, and yellow jewelweed, growing 3m tall to hide her neighbour's garage.

There's a lot more to a garden than the plants in it. For Amy, who has a background in graphic arts, "colours working together is important to me." She describes a very old, woody-based lavender plant that is a bee magnet and shows a beautiful grey-blue colour against all the layers of green in the garden. Not to mention the scent! Or the bark of the redbud tree that sheds bark as it ages, with the new bark appearing as blood red when rain wets it.

All around the garden are bird & bug baths, nesting boxes, bug houses, and art. Amy is careful to conserve water by using 3 rain barrels. Also, her husband rebuilt the garden shed using about 60% recycled materials from the old shed and some old windows and a door.

Amy's philosophy is generally to give the garden free reign. "When I try to control it too much, it doesn't do what I want it to do; when I leave it, it does."

In 2016, the first year of the Monarch Awards, Amy was a finalist in the competition. On winning this year, she says, "I was over the moon. It's lovely what people are trying to do with this award, showing that gardening for nature can also be beautiful, even if it is a bit unruly-looking compared to highly cultivated, manicured gardens & properties. It's really nice to be recognized for all the love, sweat and passion that gets put into a green space like this."



It is good to be alone in a garden at dawn or dark so that all its shy presences may haunt you and possess you in a reverie of suspended thought.

— James Douglas, *Down Shoe Lane*

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Are You an Excessive Gardener or a Laidback One?

(Excerpted with permission from [The Laidback Gardener](#), Larry Hodgson)

Excessive gardeners have a passion for cleanliness, but laidback gardeners know that many of their plantings can largely take care of themselves. Fall is really the season that determines whether you're an excessive gardener or a laidback one. For excessive gardeners, fall is a long season of endless tasks, while for laidback gardeners, it's an equally long season, but of relaxation.

Fall cleanup: is it really necessary? Excessive gardeners, for instance, feel a strong need to clean up their flower beds each fall. They pull out all annuals & cut perennials to the ground so that their beds are thoroughly clean. By pulling out the annuals, they throw out lots of great soil that clung to their roots, leaving what remains of the soil exposed to erosion over the coming months. Also, all those beneficial microbes & creatures that live in the soil will have been horribly disturbed. And by cutting back perennials, they expose what remains of the plants to the worst rigours of winter, because perennials evolved so that their stems & leaves remain in place through the winter to protect them from the weather. In addition, many beneficial insects overwinter in the dead & dying leaves of perennials & annuals they've just thrown away.

Laidback gardeners, on the other hand, leave their annuals & perennials alone from fall through spring. True enough, the annuals have been killed by frost, but even when dead they play an important role in the ecosystem, reducing erosion & helping to catch & hold on to the snow that will protect perennials & shrubs nearby. Even when there is no snow, dead annuals slow down raging winds. Nor do laidback gardeners cut back their perennials. In addition to the protection offered by dead leaves, the best fertilizer for any plant is its own decomposing foliage: it contains exactly the right dose of minerals to nourish the plant over the coming year. Why undo 'Nature's Survival Plan' just to make a garden look clean? Mother Nature doesn't know the word clean, but she does know how to produce beautiful, healthy plants! In the spring, there is still no need to remove dead foliage from the previous year. Most will have decomposed over the winter, and any leftover leaves are disappearing fast, enriching the soil, thus eliminating any need on the gardener's part to apply fertilizer. As a result, in fact, there is very little cleanup to carry out even in spring. Almost none, in fact, since Mother Nature takes care of almost everything when you let her do her job.

And what about all those fall leaves, so rich in minerals, just being thrown away? What a waste! Excessive gardeners rake up & discard fall leaves, just for the municipality to make compost from them! Laidback gardeners don't throw out fall leaves. They know leaves raked off lawns make a wonderful free mulch for flower beds & vegetable gardens to enrich the soil, even as it protects the crowns & roots of hardy plants from the cold. The more mulch they apply, the more beautiful their flower beds are. Any leaves left over can then feed the composter.

**So... are you an excessive gardener or a laidback gardener?
It is your actions over the coming weeks that tell all!**



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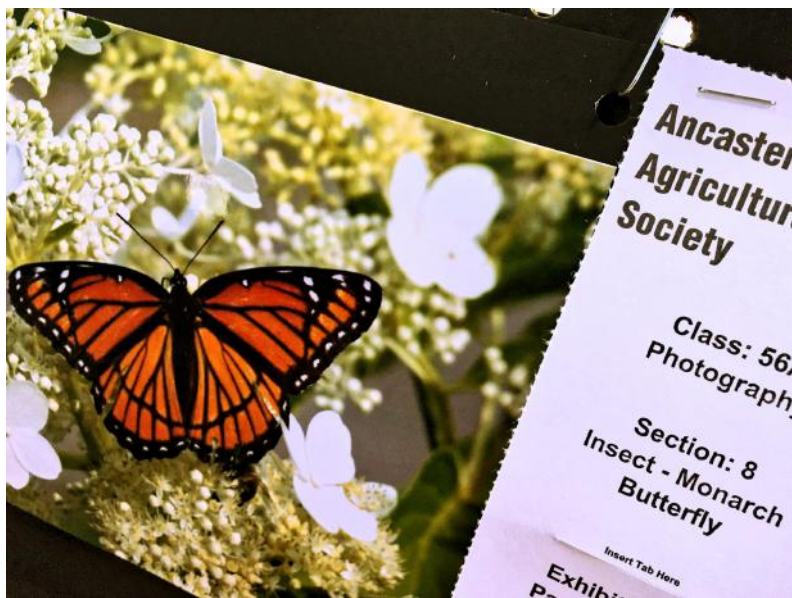
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Monarch or Viceroy?

It can be difficult to tell at times... Just ask the competitors & judges of the Monarch photography competition of the Ancaster Fair. They were fooled by the Monarch's doppelganger, the [Viceroy](#), and awarded it **first place**.



Viceroy or Monarch?

The Viceroy butterfly looks very similar to the Monarch, however, they are not closely related.

The Differences

| | |
|---|---|
| The Viceroy is smaller 2 1/2 inches - 3 1/4 inches | The Monarch is larger 3 3/4 inches - 4 1/2 inches |
| The Viceroy has a 'black necklace' around the hind wings. | |
| The flight of the Viceroy is fast and erratic. | The flight of the Monarch is slower and more relaxed. |
| The Viceroy overwinters as a larva, wrapped in a Willow or Poplar leaf. | The Monarch migrates to Mexico for the winter. |
| In Ontario the Viceroy is seen in late May. | The Monarch does not return until mid June. |
| The Viceroy's host plants are willows, poplars and cottonwood. | The Monarch's host plant is Milkweed. |

It was long thought that only the Monarch was toxic to predators, however, both the Viceroy and the Monarch are very distasteful to birds and because of the similarity in colour, birds learn to avoid both species.
The mutual mimicry of the colouration of the Monarch & the Viceroy acts as a warning sign to predators.

We can look to the [Urquhart Butterfly Garden](#) in Dundas for help in distinguishing the two. Generally, monarchs are larger, with a more relaxed 'flap-flap-glide' flight pattern, and they return from migration by about mid-June. Viceroys don't migrate (adults usually emerge from chrysalis on host willows & poplars in mid-May), and sport a tell-tale band of black (called the 'necklace') across the hind wings.

... or Queen?

To further complicate things, this "regal" family of butterflies also includes a similarly-coloured [Queen](#), whose host plants are also milkweeds. Unlikely to be seen in Ontario, though, as its range is from the southern US to the Caribbean and Central America.



When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.

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Home-grown Lies at the Farmers' Market

Ironically hard on the heels of [Ontario Agriculture Week](#), CBC's investigative consumer-awareness program, **Marketplace**, has recently turned its attention to farmers' markets (including the [Burlington Mall market](#)), with undercover investigations putting the lie to some vendors' claims for their 'locally grown' and 'organic' produce — some of which were actually grown in Mexico, or in industrial-scale greenhouses, and treated with pesticides.

Read the [summary online](#) or watch the full report (~ 22 min.) on Marketplace's YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/YYwB63YslbA>

marketplace
CANADA'S CONSUMER WATCHDOG WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK

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Halton Forest Festival

Conservation Halton presents the [Halton Forest Festival](#), whose mission is to further educate the public (including curriculum programs for Grade 6 & 7 students) about their local forest ecosystems and the value of the plants & animals that live within them. The festivities take place from **12-17 October** at the Rattlesnake Point Conservation Area in Milton.



Hamilton's 97th Annual Fall Garden & Mum Show

Hamilton has a love affair with its official flower, the chrysanthemum, and has demonstrated it with an annual show in the Gage Park greenhouses every year since 1920. The show is known for the sheer numbers of flowers in displays all created by city parks department staff. This year's theme is [Under The Big Top](#), running from **20-29 October**, open from 9am – 7pm daily.



Life begins the day you start a garden. — Chinese Proverb

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Halton Environment Network Invasive Species Removal Project

The Halton Environment Network continues its [ongoing project](#) to remove invasive plant species from protected natural lands of the Royal Botanical Gardens. Volunteers are welcome **every Saturday from 9am-1pm until 11 November** at the Nature Interpretive Centre, 16 Old Guelph Rd., Hamilton. Sign up form available [here](#).



Urquhart Butterfly Garden 2017 Photography Competition

If you haven't yet seen the [prize-winning photos](#) from the UBG's 2017 competition, you owe it to yourself to visit their website to enjoy the beauty of nature and the skill of photographers young & old in capturing it.

Hummingbirds!

The **Ancaster Horticultural Society** welcomes Cindy Cartwright, founder & Lead Researcher of [Hummingbirds Canada](#) (2010), and the founder & coordinator of the Ontario Hummingbird Project (2005). The overall goal of the Ontario Hummingbird Project is to understand the life cycle of Ontario's hummingbirds. The project involves participation from birders, banders & members of the general public throughout Ontario. Presently Cindy is one of only 5 active Canadian banders with Master permits to band hummingbirds. The presentation will outline the project details, what has been learned so far, how people can participate, and what we hope to learn in the future. All are welcome & [registration is free](#): 7:30pm on **17 October** at the Ancaster Branch of the Hamilton Public Library.



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Why try to explain miracles to your kids when you can just have them plant a garden? — Robert Brault