




# SEEDING FOR Pollinators

WRITTEN & PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROSALEEN EGAN

Butterfly  
Garden



A photograph of Julie Power standing in her front-yard native plant garden. She is wearing a blue tank top, a white cap, and sunglasses. The garden is filled with various native plants, including yellow Black-eyed Susans, purple flowers, and green foliage. In the background, there is a house with a brown roof and a utility tower.

Julie Power of Georgetown in her front-yard native plant garden. Last year, she initiated the 1000+ Pollinator Plant Project, giving 2,900 native plants to individuals and community groups.

**N**ative plants, animals, insects, and birds are interdependent and sustain one another. The networks of individuals and organizations in Halton Hills bordering the Niagara Escarpment who are dedicated to nurturing nature have a similar synergy.



**C**reating native plant gardens, meadows and habitat to attract and sustain native species of bees, butterflies, and birds in communities and on personal property, are the groups Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources (POWER), Halton David Suzuki Butterflyway Rangers, Norval Community Association, Sustainable Milton and members in the Let's Nurture Nature-Halton

Hills Facebook group. One critical individual working in the background is Julie Power of Georgetown.

For years, Julie has been growing and sharing native plants and seedlings from her quarter-acre suburban property. In 2021 Julie initiated the 1,000+ Pollinator Plant Project to, as she says, "Seed the joy, peace and love found in nurturing nature, by creating habitat to support all the little souls with

whom we share the earth."

In 2013, Julie began to create a pollinator paradise in her 15-metre by 15-metre, or 50-foot by 50-foot sunny front yard. Her backyard is shaded and supports different plants than the front. She offered plants to everyone she knew or encountered, who would tell people, who would tell others. She only started giving away plants to organized groups in the last couple of years.

### **Thousands of Plants**

The incredible success of the 1000+ Pollinator Plant Project proves the power of spreading the word. It far exceeded its original goal as she contributed 2,900 plants in 2021. Plants from Julie were added to more-than 100 new or existing gardens including: four parks, one school, one retirement home, four ecosystem restoration projects, one community garden, and the Happily Ever



▲ Julie Power's 15-metre-by-15-metre front garden hosts more than 60 native species including those shown here: Brown-eyed Susan, Black-eyed Susan, Purple Coneflower, Joe Pye Weed, *Liatris ligulistylis*, Agastache, Butterfly Weed, Swamp Milkweed, New England Aster, Switchgrass and Violets.



▲ Individuals choosing native plants to bring home, freely given by Julie Power to attract and support pollinators.



▲ This roadside garden in Glen Williams is tended by Sandy Gillians. She is integrating and expanding an existing garden to include habitat for pollinators and native plants, some of which came from Julie Power. After four years, the property now supports about 60 per cent native plants and 40 per cent ornamentals.



▲ Sandy Gillians at her garden. She labels her plants to let curious passersby know what they are seeing, and as a way to promote pollinator gardens.

Esther Farm Sanctuary in Campbellville, world-famous for Esther the Wonder Pig.

Julie also suggested a planting design for the pollinator canoe native plant and shrub garden at McNab Park in Norval, giving plants for it and the Markham IBM pollinator canoe garden connected to the David Suzuki Butterflyway Project. Pollinator canoes were intended as a new use for old canoes, serving as planters, but have evolved to include new materials.

Julie says, “Although it’s been a lot of work, knowing I am making a small difference and the delight I see on people’s faces when I give them plants makes it all worth while.” She encourages people to share their resources and create more habitat.

POWER co-op student Julia Crean, who worked on the 1,000+ Pollinator Plant Project with Julie, says “It’s been an inspiring journey that has strengthened my connection to native plants and has introduced

me to amazing people in our community who are passionate about conservation. I will always look up to Julie as a role model and be grateful that she helped me take my first steps in conservation efforts.”

There are many people who are grateful, and the success of the project is a testament to Julie’s willingness to share her knowledge and dedication. It also reflects the growing public interest in supporting the propagation of native plants and the creatures they attract.

### **Powerful Pollinators**

Pollinators are a diverse and varied group including bees, flies, butterflies, wasps, beetles, ants, moths and hummingbirds. We often hear of the decline of the non-native honeybee, yet some of Canada’s 800 species of native bees are threatened and declining.

According to [davidsuski.org](http://davidsuski.org), “Insects are a key food source for birds and fish and play a vital role in forests and fields

as decomposers. They also ensure that plants and crops flourish. Over three-quarters of wild flowering plants and one-third of the food we eat depend on insect pollination.”

Many species can be supported by creating habitat, food and shelter right outside your door or in neighbourhood parks, and other outdoor suburban and urban environments. A large property is not needed.

Julie has documented more than 200 butterflies in various stages of development. She reports, “I’ve counted over 60 bumblebees at once in our front yard. Our garden supports over 100 pollinator species. Proof that one little native plant garden can make a huge difference.” She shares plants and seeds with other native plant enthusiasts to expand the number of species in her garden. One such friend, Sheri Lewis, has a quarter acre of land in Rockwood and 80 species of native plants. She is keen to encourage people to be stewards of their own property, whatever the size,

and thus cumulatively create acres of native gardens and meadows. She is also thrilled to have two species of at-risk bumble bees, the Tri-Coloured and the Brown-belted Bumble Bee. She says, “If you plant it, they will come.”

To be able to give away as many plants as she does, Julie gathers seeds from her existing plants in the fall. She explains the process: “Fill pots with soil, toss in seeds, cover with a bit of soil, label and leave outside. Most native species here require cold stratification, which means they need freezing temperatures for a period before they will sprout. This prevents them sprouting at the wrong time of year. I dig up lots of plants from the garden too, and a few months later you can not even tell. They fill back in quickly. I try to give more mature plants to public projects where they will not be tended every day and are in threat of being trampled.”

A native plant garden creates habitat, and it’s also a thing of beauty both in varied



▲ Sheri Lewis in Julie's garden. Sheri and Julie Power are mutual supporters, contributing plants to each other's gardens and encouraging people to create pollinator gardens of any size.



▲ Katherine Shaw, a butterfly ranger with the Halton Butterflyway Project, cites one of the reasons for the project's success is the free plants from Julie's garden given to participants. In two years, the ongoing project has worked to develop 103 private gardens and 13 public gardens.



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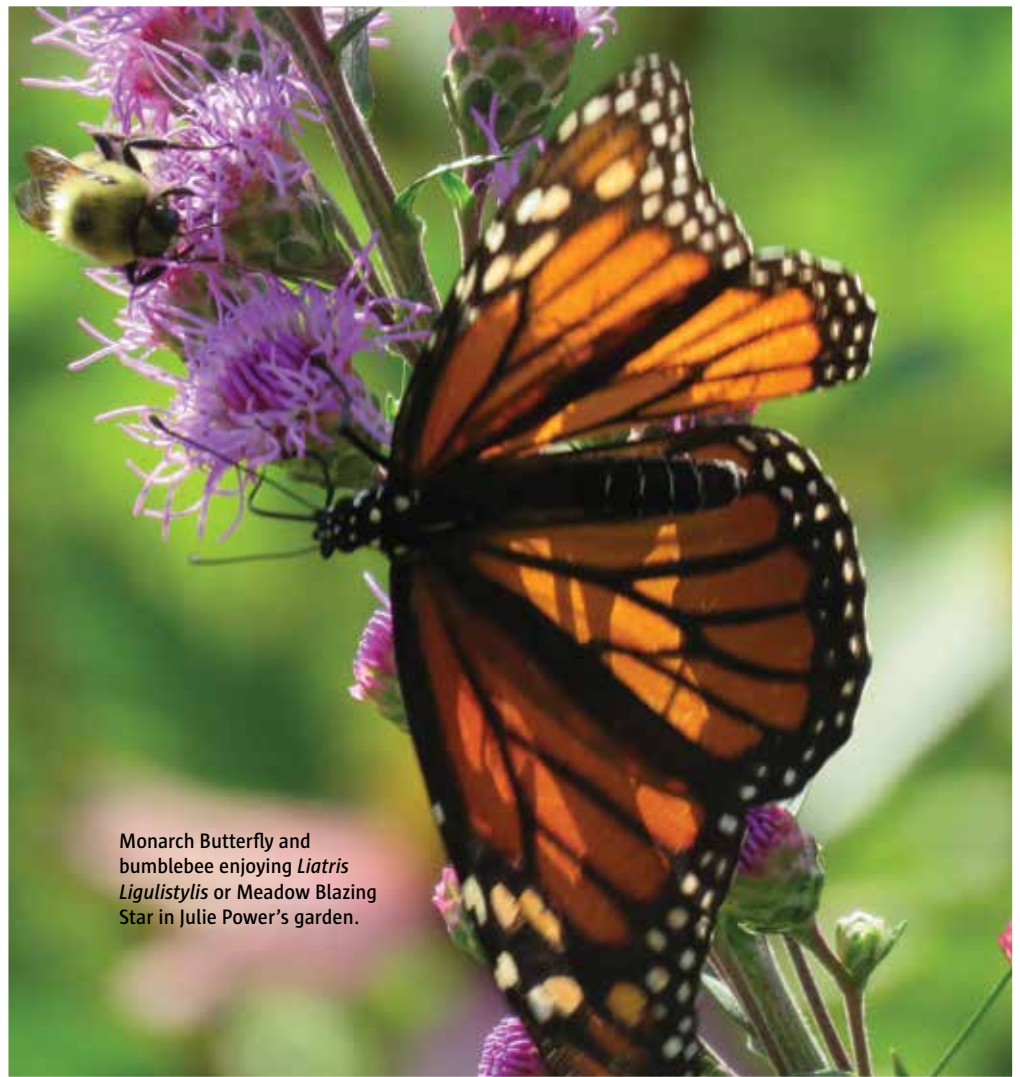
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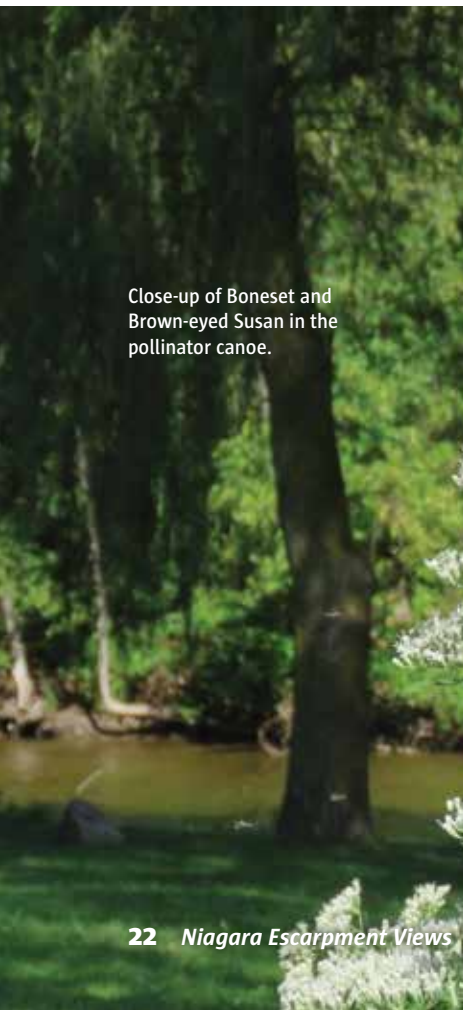
plant life and the life that it sustains. Julie's favourite butterfly, the Red Admiral, visits her on sunny summer evenings. She says "They will flutter all around us and continuously land on us and stay. It is one of the most magical experiences I look forward to in the summer."

To follow the ongoing 1000+ Pollinator Plant Project, share experiences and enjoy Julie's own beautiful photos of plants and pollinators visit Let's Nurture Nature-Halton Hills Facebook page and haltonhillsnature.com. **NEV**

*Rosaleen Egan's last feature for Niagara Escarpment Views was "Clearview's Fun Festivities for Fall" in Autumn 2019.*



Monarch Butterfly and bumblebee enjoying *Liatris Ligulistylis* or Meadow Blazing Star in Julie Power's garden.



Close-up of Boneset and Brown-eyed Susan in the pollinator canoe.









▼ The pollinator canoe by the Credit River at McNab Park in Norval was made by metal artist Doris Treleven of Metalscape. It contains native plants used by First Nations in traditional medicinal uses. The Canada-wide David Suzuki Foundation Butterflyway Project suggests using old canoes as a creative way to add native plants to any landscape.



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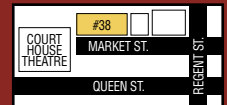
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