

## June 2026 Newsletter

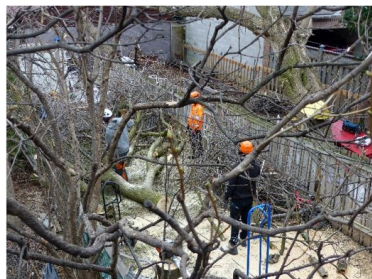
### Gardens are Blooming all Around Us Let's celebrate native plants in our neighbourhoods



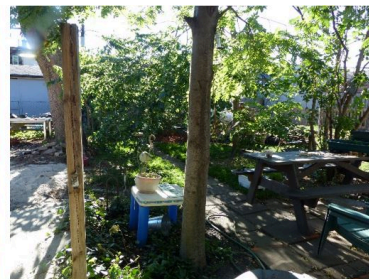
As spring warms into summer, our backyards transform. Pollinators swarm, birds nest, and native plants shift their palettes. Nesting birds chase fat caterpillars, while native bees seek bare soil and fresh nectar. Overhead, fading tree blossoms give way to the first forming of fruits, nuts, and seeds.

Years ago, I tried to cram an entire ecosystem into my own narrow backyard. I wanted it all: sunny and shady native beds, berry trees, a water feature, a wood pile, and a quiet place to sit. But my space was heavily constrained, buried under the deep shade of my neighbours' massive Norway and Manitoba maples.

Then, a powerful windstorm tore through our block, bringing down the maples and changing everything.



Arborists removing fallen trees



3 backyards with fences removed



A tree cutout and high/low fencing

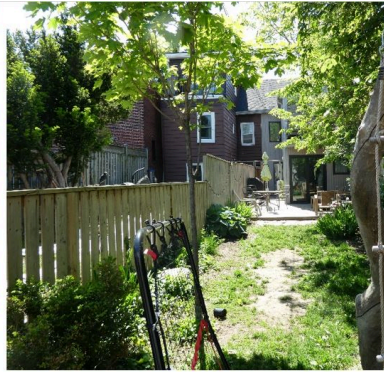
Out of that destruction, a collective habitat emerged. My neighbours and I split the costs of an arborist and new fences, explicitly designing cutouts to save shared trees. Because they wanted to incorporate native plants, vegetables, and play spaces, my native plant garden naturally spilled over our property lines. I connected them with Project Swallowtail, and our individual gardens began to merge while remaining distinct.

Standing on my second-floor deck later that season, a powerful realization hit me: birds don't see property lines.

My yard didn't need to hold everything. By collaborating with the people across the fence, our individual plots became one continuous, resilient sanctuary. As native plant gardeners, our ultimate impact expands exponentially the moment we look past our own garden gates.



Heirloom vegetable garden with native plants



A place for kids to play  
LEAF planted tree and native plants,  
vegetables and annuals



A bird sanctuary where friends can  
sing to each other with bird  
accompaniment

Sharon Lovett, Newsletter Editor (you can think of this as a sample story about a garden for the photo competition below)

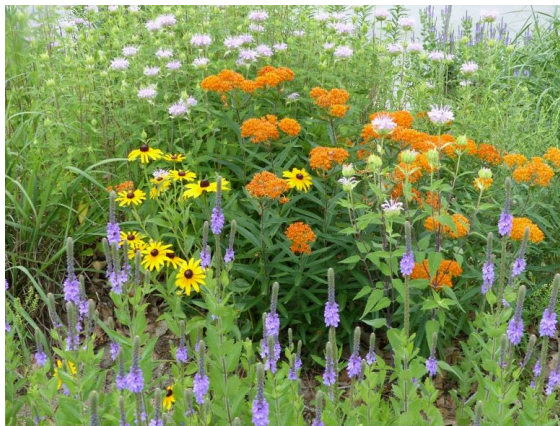
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## Nature in Focus: Announcing the Project Swallowtail Photo Competition!

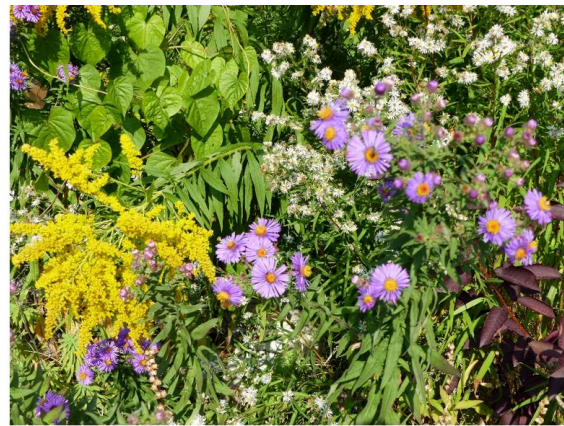
Your native gardens do more than just grow plants—they build community and create vital lifelines for local wildlife. To celebrate your incredible hard work and inspiring stories, Project Swallowtail is launching an official photo competition late this autumn!

The full details are currently brewing, but the mission is clear: we want to showcase how our collective love of nature transforms our neighborhoods.

**The contest won't officially open until the weather cools, but the action starts right now. We need you to document your garden's journey through the peak growing season of summer and into the fall.**



Mid-summer flowers



Autumn flowers

### Sneak Peek: Competition Categories (suggestions)

We are designing diverse categories so every participant can shine:

- 🌱 Seed Sitter Showdowns: Awards for the highest seedling survival rates and the greatest species diversity.
- 🏠 Garden Transformations: Everything from individual yard close-ups to full neighborhood-wide overhauls.
- 🦋 Wild Encounters: Captivating shots of the insects, birds, and animals utilizing your habitat.

- 🤝 Community Champions: Recognizing schools, community gardens, and the most active local groups.
- 📣 The Influencer Award: Celebrating individuals who successfully inspired their neighbors to plant native.

### Your Action Plan for Summer & Fall

Don't wait for autumn to start clicking! Here is how you can prepare today:

- Snap "Before and After" Shots: Document your bare dirt, lawn or existing gardens to show the transformation over time. Each season has its own palette.
- Log Your Visitors: Keep using platforms like [iNaturalist](#) and [eBird](#) to track the wildlife returning to your space, and [In the Zone Gardens](#), [Re:Grow](#) or other platforms or spreadsheets to document your garden plants.
- Store Your Media: Keep your best photos and videos saved in an online drive or share them on your personal social media channels for now.

When the competition launches, we will ask for links to your photo hubs and a few select gems to feature right here in the newsletter and on our website. Grab your cameras, head outside, and let's capture the beauty of gardening with native plants!

If anyone is interested in judging the entries, providing prizes or has any suggestions, please email [projectswallowtail@gmail.com](mailto:projectswallowtail@gmail.com). Also let us know if you are planning on participating so we can send you tailored updates and other information.

### Featured Member Events



**Solstice Tour 1 (evening): Wednesday, June 24, 7:00pm to 8:30pm**

**Solstice Tour 2 (afternoon): Friday, June 26, 1:00pm to 2:30pm**

Join block ambassador Douglas Counter for a **free Summer Solstice Tour** of his native habitat gardens located near the Etobicoke Civic Centre. Offered on two dates, this **1.5-hour tour** includes: transitioning from spring to summer bloom; increasing the habitat value of your garden; forming a healing connection with the land and a sense of place through wild gardening; propagating native plants from collected seed, and more.

Douglas brings 29 years of practical, hands-on experience gardening with native plants to these tours of his species-rich prairie, woodland, and storm water filtration boulevard gardens—each a beautiful example of functioning habitat.

Each guest will receive a **free organic native plant** of their choice (4 inch pot) propagated by Douglas from seed collected from his gardens; additional plants will be available for \$4 each.

**Spaces are limited, so please RSVP to Douglas today at**

**[dcu.humanature@rogers.com](mailto:dcu.humanature@rogers.com)** and include your tour date in the subject line of your email.

Douglas will confirm location details with guests.



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### **Pollinator Week 2026 takes place internationally from June 22–28**

Managed by **Pollinator Partnership** and recognized globally, this week-long event celebrates the vital role of bees, butterflies, bats, and other pollinators in our ecosystem and food supply.

Getting involved locally is easy with several organized activities and community science initiatives:

- International Pollinator **BioBlitz**: Join the community science effort on
- **iNaturalist** by photographing and logging pollinator species you spot between June 22 and June 28.
- Host a Garden Tour: Inspire others by showing off your own pollinator-friendly spaces—whether a cozy balcony or a sprawling yard.
- Plant Native Wildflowers: Protect vulnerable species by building a habitat that supplies natural food and shelter.
- Explore Resources: Download the **Pollinator Partnership Canada 2026 Toolkit** for educational materials, checklists, and activity ideas.
- Seeds of Diversity **Pollinator Week**
- Guided nature tours at the **Wilket Creek Ravine Tour** at the Toronto Botanical Garden

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### **Tell us About Your Garden**

Continuing the “Tell us about your garden” responses. These motivating anecdotes show how much we can accomplish individually and together. We need more stories for our upcoming newsletters. You can add your own story in **this form** or email **[projectswallowtail@gmail.com](mailto:projectswallowtail@gmail.com)**

*Corner lot in East Danforth (Toronto) with lots of native plants and space for lots more (I have too much lawn and need to get rid of it).*

*Both front and back yards are native. No front lawn. Garden only.*

*I am a member of Garrison Creek Community Garden and a board member with The Giving Garden an organization that works with residents in long term care homes to design and animate therapeutic edible and pollinator gardenscapes. I want to be more deeply involved in Project Swallowtail as opportunities become available and this seems like a great way to learn more and be able to offer something to the project*

*95% native plants in front (sun) and back (full shade). recent focus native shrubs*

*I have a lot of different perennials and shrubs including a lot of natives*

*Organic and fenced, ready for planting. Suburb*

*I've started taking care of a few garden spaces in Toronto, including a small rooftop veggie garden, a deep shade backyard garden, a shade patio space (mostly deeper containers with some native species added last year). There are also a few sunnier and sun/shade spots. One has recently been dug up to replace pipes, and has a good opportunity for redesign. The other also is overdue for love. It is quite dry in summer. While I currently try to add native pollinator plant species, I'd love to adopt more focused pollinator friendly plans for them, and encourage others in my community to join in.*

*I have two home gardens. My backyard garden is fully dedicated to supporting pollinators and includes cat mint, lavender, Russian sage, and coneflowers. My front yard is still a work in progress, as many of the plants were selected by a previous owner, but I continue to add more pollinator-friendly and native plants each year.*

*I run a small garden business (Blooming City). My staff and I are to varying degrees responsible for several dozen gardens throughout the city, don't have one of my own at the moment. My clients are interested in ecological gardening to varying degrees and I would like to learn more.*

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## Articles and Resources

### **14 Charming Photos That Showcase the Beautiful Bonds Between Birds and Native Plants**

Bask in some of our favorite images from the Plants for Birds category in the **[2025 Audubon Photography Awards](#)**.

Native plants support birds throughout their life cycles and across generations. With their seeds, berries, and branches, they provide food and shelter for birds of all shapes and sizes, from large herons to tiny hummingbirds.

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## We'd Love to Hear From You!

We're looking for more stories, events, photos, and updates to share with the Project Swallowtail community in our newsletters!

- To share an event, please add it to the **[Event Form](#)**.

- View events in our website [Calendar](#)
  - To contribute articles or messages, use the [Newsletter Content Form](#).
  - Feedback on our interactive maps. (available only to map participants)
  - Gardening and plant info on our [Google Drive](#)
  - Our new [Project Swallowtail website](#)
  - [Publications and Resources](#)
  - Project Swallowtail [Sign-Up form](#) (for friends and family, you are signed up)
  - To add your garden to our map please [Update your Profile](#)
  - Our April 2026 newsletter has links to our maps. If you are on the map you should have received it. If you need the links email [projectswallowtail@gmail.com](mailto:projectswallowtail@gmail.com)
- 



neighbours united for nature



Contact Us

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