

SAVING THE ICONIC MONARCH

SHERRY HAYES
OFFERS GARDEN
PLANNING TIPS FOR
AT-RISK SPECIES



SHERRY HAYES
Column

mentioned sightings in the Point Pelee area in May, monarchs don't seem to be in abundance in our area.

I finally spotted one in mid-July and was overjoyed to see three more in the Selkirk and Dunnville regions at the end of July. However, all of this has left me wondering. Are they arriving in our area late this year or is this the story to come? Let's hope not.

Noted as 'special concern' on Ontario's list of species at risk, the iconic monarch butterfly was once found by the hundreds in Ontario. They were a sight to behold while flitting through urban, suburban and rural environs, always



Sherry Hayes photo

Consider a wide range of perennials or flowering shrubs to attract monarchs.

on the search for milkweed – the only plant where eggs are deposited and new generations emerge.

Sadly, Milkweed appears to be less abundant, perhaps due to roadside cutting and overdevelopment of once open lands. The continued reduction of their primary plant source for reproduction purposes surely will

force a downward trajectory of this species.

But help is on the way in the form of garden stewards. And you can join the ever-growing wildlife enthusiasts making space on their own plot of land, all for the greater good of saving this fragile yet tenacious little creature.

It's time to invite a monarch into your backyard.

These gardens should include a water source, which is important to provide them with a refreshing drink. When using a birdbath keep it from strong, direct sunlight. Also rinse and clean the bowl daily to avoid long-standing water which could create mosquito issues.

Reserve a spot in your garden to plant a milkweed or two to help those arriving and to jumpstart a new

generation. And consider a few of the following nourishing plants that monarchs enjoy: purple coneflower; bee balm; New England aster; black-eyed Susan; Joe Pye weed and yarrow plus butterfly bush.

There are many other plants monarchs will consider when their favourites are not available. In my past garden, I witnessed them enjoying a plethora of flowering plants including rose of Sharon and hydrangea treeforms, which is where I captured, so to speak, the subject for my painting –

“Winged Warrior.” It is a tribute to this iconic species while portraying a darkness of things that could come if we don't step forward to save these fiery orange beauties.

While this summer marches forward, for those

planning an addition to their gardens this fall, perhaps take time to consider a few plants that might just entice a monarch butterfly to visit your yard. Let's all revitalize this species at risk so that it can be enjoyed now and for generations to come. Happy gardening!

Sherry Hayes is a part time writer and an award winning landscape designer and owner of Landscaping With Style, a design firm in Stoney Creek. She is also a nature artist and advocate for Canada's endangered species. For more information on outdoor planning or to read about her endangered species art and donation program, visit her websites at landscapingwithstyle.on.ca or artscapesbyserry.ca or call 905-574-7606