

SUBURBAN RESTORATION

When Karen and Clayton moved into their ranch-style house, the yard was an all-too-familiar suburban wasteland of turf grass and invasive plants. With two young children and two full-time jobs, there was more than enough to keep them busy, but over the

years they have managed to tackle one ambitious restoration project after the last, one area at a time.

DIY FOR WILDLIFE

The two have done almost all the work themselves — solarizing and creating new planting areas, positioning rocks, chopping down and removing truckloads of invasive honeysuckle trees. Most notably, Clayton designed, built and installed the geometric Corten grid that gives definition to their front garden.

This grid was originally planted with conventional perennials — salvias, liriopes and the like. Over time, however, they have been replaced as Karen learned more about the importance of native plants.

The turf grass on the other side of the drive was also replaced, with drought-tolerant asters and goldenrods that provide crucial late season pollinator sustenance. And the backy property line formerly invaded by honeysuckle is now home to many new native shrubs.

LOOK FOR:

- The Zen garden aesthetic of the front garden, with its horizontal lines and rock accents.
- Massive boulders repurposed as back deck steps.
- The backyard overlook to Rock Creek, which brings wild visitors like deer and foxes.



from empty to plenty



from empty to plenty



creek dropoff & deer protection of newly planted native shrubs

BEAUTY & MISSION

There was no sidewalk when Kathy moved into this house, just a steep dropoff to the street level. When a large Norway Maple blew over and landed on the neighbor's house across the street, she took the opportunity to replace it with a native River Birch, a

reminder of her family's Canadian heritage and her childhood on five wooded riverbank acres in Ohio.



Smokebush



Rose & Goutweed on the steep sidewalk slope



Elderberry & Bottlebrush Buckeye



River Oats "fronted" by Blue Wild Indigo



Fern & Geranium



Coral Honeysuckle

DIPLOMATIC BEAUTY

"I planted plenty of mistakes too," Kathy recalls, and she has by no means eradicated them all. Goutweed and English Ivy are still used to combat erosion in her steep front yard, and garden standards like roses act as ambassadors to passersby.

Kathy bought native plants from the earliest days of Grow Native, when sales were held at the River Market. As these natives filled in and spread, the birds began to come in droves. As a bonus, these dense plantings of large plants very effectively buffer the sights and sounds of the busy road.

In the backyard Kathy has reproduced the woodland feel of her childhood, with dense shrub borders and understory trees, and rich ground cover carpets of Wild Geranium, Celandine Poppy and native ferns.

LOOK FOR:

- The driveway strip of River Oats, "fronted" by neighbor-friendly plants like annual sunflowers.
- A stunning Bottlebrush Buckeye whose branches seem to float above the pond on the terrace below.
- Many wonderful shrubs, including Leatherwood, St. John's Wort, Ninebark and Mock Orange.

NEW DIRECTION

Among those in the know, Talis's garden is a much-admired, not-to-be missed star of garden society tours. His artfully composed beds overflow with exceptional, unusual or otherwise outstanding plants — many more than you might think could possibly fit into a 1+ acre lot, including hundreds of meticulously pruned trees.



Red Buckeye



Common Milkweed



River Birches & Oakleaf Hydrangea

But this garden has undergone a recent change in direction: After attending a presentation by Doug Tallamy and reading his book, *Nature's Best Hope*, Talis attended the 2024 Deep Roots Plan It Native Conference. He walked out resolving to take action: "I realized: I don't have time to lose."

OLD & NEW

As it turns out, Talis has actually had many native plants all along, though chosen for aesthetic interest rather than wildlife value. Longtime natives include Red Buckeye, River Birch, Serviceberry, Staghorn Sumac, Virginia Sweetspire, Pawpaw, Blue Wild Indigo, Blue Star Amsonia, and the popular southeast natives Bottlebrush Buckeye, Carolina Allspice and Oakleaf Hydrangea. There are also extensive ground covers of Wild Ginger and Ostrich Fern.

These are now joined by new beds of glade plants in a rare sunny area (remember all those trees?), and many new natives tucked into existing shade beds.

LOOK FOR:

- The large stand of Common Milkweed beside the enclosed peony garden.
- On the street slope: Oakleaf Hydrangea spilling over a rock wall, under a screen of pollarded River Birches. On both sides of the driveway: sculptural, self-spreading, erosion-fighting Staghorn Sumac.
- Shade-tolerant keystone Goldenrods and Asters in shrub borders - great replacements for hostas.

WILDLIFE REFUGE

Karen G began a “pretty perennial garden” when she moved into this house 35 years ago. But a UMKC Communiversity course called “Food Not Lawns” set her off on a different path, considering “how you take care of your land.” Soon this lifelong learner was pursuing Kansas Master Naturalist studies and permaculture design certification.



Coral Honeysuckle
& Oakleaf Hydrangea



Yellow Passionflower



Bignonia



Hazelnut & pond



New England Aster
& Tall Goldenrod



Wild Plum

SUSTAINABLE SUSTENANCE

“I started focusing on habitat more than anything else,” Karen says. To this end, she planted wildlife-sustaining plants like native Persimmon, Pecan, Hazelnut (a thicketing background for the pond), Pawpaw, Chokeberry and Wild Plum.

There are also apple and cherry trees and large stands of Elderberry, plus more unusual natives like Green Dragon, Wild Quinine, Jewelweed, Stinging Nettle, Yellow Passionflower and Bignonia Vine.

The richness of Karen’s soil, which she is careful never to disturb, is evident in the health and size of her plants and the many birds who make their home here.

FINAL FEAST

In late summer the front yard’s large keystone species — New England Aster, Tall Goldenrod, Cup Plant and Jerusalem Artichoke — put on a spectacular display and become a frenzy of pollinator activity.

LOOK FOR:

- The blooming Catalpa tree left of the driveway.
- Intentional brush piles left for wildlife shelter.
- The rain garden swale (dug by Karen and Chris) in which thrive Indian Pink, Joe Pye Weed, Black Cohosh, Spiderwort and Spicebushes.

UNCOMMON MILKWEED



With its tropical foliage, fuzzy buds, and enormous, fragrant, disco-ball flowers, the stunning *Asclepias syriaca* is unfairly slandered by the monicker Common Milkweed. There is certainly nothing common or weedy about it.



This beautiful plant is also highly valuable. While most are aware that Milkweed is the only genus on which Monarchs lay eggs, studies have found that when given a choice of different Milkweed species, female Monarchs seek out and lay far more eggs on Common Milkweed. Further studies have discovered the surprising reason: eggs laid on Common Milkweed have a higher rate of success to adulthood. Mom knows best!



The “common” part of the appellation originally came from its ubiquity in the wild. But Common Milkweed is no longer at all common, with losses of more than a third of the Midwest’s milkweed stock from 1999-2014, and more loss in the decade since.

Happily, Common Milkweed grows very well in Kansas City gardens, thriving in our hard, dry clay, and spreading itself into the large amount of biomass needed by Monarch caterpillars. It is that robustness and generosity that has earned it a widespread reputation as “aggressive” and “too vigorous and weedy for borders.” (Talk about thankless!)

But as we are seeing again and again in our Habitat Gardens, resilient plants that thrive in difficult situations, and generously spread themselves, are allies, not enemies. They help us build the density and layers that truly provide habitat to wildlife—all for free, and with little effort. Talk about win-win. So let’s make Common Milkweed common again!

When most people say “Butterfly Garden,” they think colorful flowers. But the life cycle of most butterfly and moth species depends primarily on native trees.

This is a Butterfly Garden

ADULTS

draw nutrients from nectar, tree sap, mud, leaf litter and other rotting organic matter



EGGS

are laid on the leaves of native trees (mostly), shrubs and perennials



PUPAE

Many species overwinter in chrysalis form, wrapped inside or attached to fallen leaves for safety.

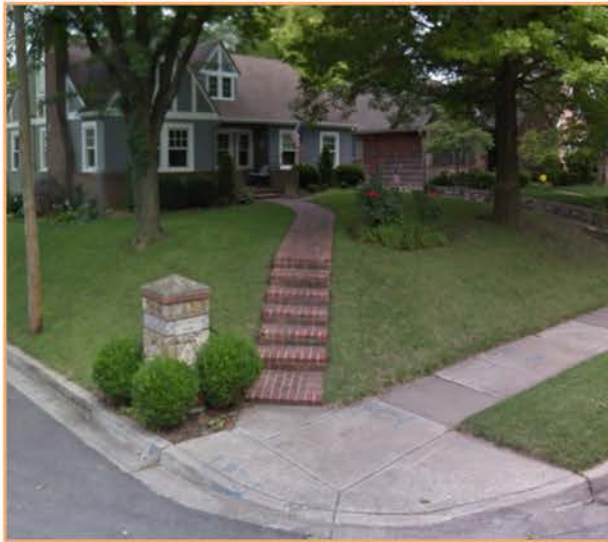


LARVAE

To reach adulthood, caterpillars must have access to enough native tree and plant leaves to grow 2000%.

Want butterflies?

Plant an oak.



Ten Steps Everyone Can Take

(adapted from Doug Tallamy's Nature's Best Hope & Homegrown National Park)

1. SHRINK THE LAWN.
2. REMOVE INVASIVES.
3. FOCUS ON KEYSTONES.
4. PLANT MORE: more area, more layers, more species.
5. SAY NO TO POISON. Green, weed-free lawn means herbicide, insecticide and chemical fertilizer — 100 million tons a year in the U.S.
6. BE VISIBLE. Grow habitat gardens where people can see and help shift the landscaping aesthetic in Kansas City.
7. REDUCE NIGHT-TIME LIGHT POLLUTION.
8. MINIMIZE DISRUPTIONS like mowing and blowing.
9. LET CATERPILLARS LIVE. Leave the leaves & grow soft landings.
10. SHARING IS CARING. Use your voice with your HOA, city, neighbors and business. Help change norms and rewrite ordinances.

Ten Steps Everyone Can Take

(adapted from Doug Tallamy, Steps #1-3 illustrated by Karen & Clay)

1. Shrink the lawn



2. Remove invasives



3. Focus on Keystones





KC Keystone Trees & Shrubs

While Monarch butterflies famously lay their eggs exclusively on Milkweeds, most other Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) lay theirs on the leaves of native trees.



White Oak (*Quercus*) 550 species hosted



Pin Oak (*Quercus*) 550 species hosted



Wild Plum (*Prunus*) 455 species hosted



Prairie Willow (*Salix*) 450 species hosted



River Birch (*Betula*) 410 species hosted



Silver Maple (*Acer*) 255 species hosted



KC Keystone Perennials

Keystones go way beyond nectar and pollen. They are the foundation of the food web, their very plant material providing both food and shelter (hosting) for many insect species.



Gray Goldenrod (Solidago) 146 species hosted



Rough Goldenrod (Solidago) 146 species hosted



Aromatic Aster (Symphyotrichum) 133 species hosted



Smooth Aster (Symphyotrichum) 133 species hosted



Annual Sunflower (Helianthus) 116 species hosted



Maximilian Sunflower (Helianthus) 116 species hosted



Tall Goldenrod and New England Aster in Karen G's garden.

Big & Beautiful

Is your yard undergrown?

We have become accustomed to the look of barren landscapes, stretches of pristine lawn that offer wildlife no sustenance or shelter. Little surprise songbird populations have been decimated by a third in our lifetime, and are dwindling ever faster.

How do we help?

Shift the aesthetic from neat to replete.

Size matters. It's no accident that top keystone species like oaks, asters and goldenrod are big and abundant. Big trees and large stands of full-bodied, profusely blooming flowers:

- host more insects,
- sequester more carbon,
- absorb more stormwater,
- produce more food and
- provide more habitat.

Big is bountiful. Bring life to your landscape: go home and go big.



Big Beauties & Generous Givers

Often maligned as “weedy” or “thugs” by conventional gardeners, big, muscular, expansive native perennials like Goldenrods, Asters and River Oats are generous wildlife supporters. Let this month’s big beauties inspire you: Go Home & Go Big!



Aromatic Aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*)



Cup Plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*)



Sweet Coneflower (*Rudbeckia subtomentosa*)



New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)



Jerusalem Artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*)



River Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)



Full Sun (Prairie/Glade) Blooms



Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)



Rose Verbena (*Glandula canadensis*)



Prairie Blazing Star (*Liatris pycnostachya*)



Wild Petunia (*Ruellia humilis*)



Purple Poppy Mallow (*Callirhoe involucrata*)



Pale Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*)

PRESENTED BY THE GATTERMEIR FAMILY FOUNDATION



HABITAT GARDEN TOURS

What is a Habitat Garden?

A native plant garden that provides habitat for birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife.

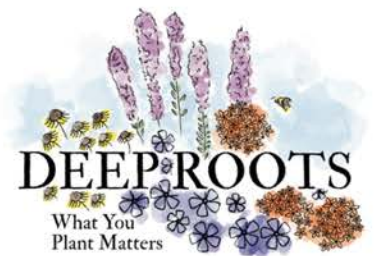
Second Saturday Tours

Every Second Saturday from April to October, visit three residential habitat gardens to:

- Experience diverse habitat gardens and the succession of seasonal blooms that support wildlife
- Meet other gardeners, native plant enthusiasts and wildlife supporters
- Find inspiration and information to grow your own native plant habitat garden

Learn More & Sign Up

Visit [DeepRoots.org/HabitatGardens](https://www.DeepRoots.org/HabitatGardens) and click **Sign Up** or go directly to our **Eventbrite subscription page**



Because what you plant matters — for people, for wildlife, and the natural environment we all share.



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