



## HABITAT GARDEN TOURS

Saturday, October 12th

9:00 - 11:00 a.m. (*all gardens*)

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

(*Roeland Park Refuge - see details*)

## OCTOBER KEYSTONE CORNUCOPIA

October is time for the final feast, for butterflies and for Habitat Garden Tours. To celebrate the end, we return to the beginning, revisiting a garden from each of the first three months (plus a bonus):

- 9:00-11:00 a.m. - Visit all four gardens in any order
- 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon - Should you wish, join us at Roeland Park Refuge for a casual mingle. Hang out and enjoy the company of this season's habitat garden hosts, volunteers and fellow enthusiasts.
  - Feel free to BYO camp chair, blanket, snack or beverage
  - Featuring live traditional celtic and folk music



## LOOMIS WOOD

In April, Christopher's garden was an ocean of Mayapple, Columbine, Golden Alexander, Golden Groundsel and Virginia Bluebell. These dainty spring ephemerals have mostly gone dormant, replaced by exuberant forests of Hairy Sunflower, Canadian Goldenrod and Stiff Goldenrod.

### *Big Beauties*

In contrast to more cautious types who seek to replace their old conventional garden plants with equally small, neat, "well-behaved" natives, Christopher is unafraid of size and enthusiasm. He embraces statuesque perennials like Prairie Dock and Tall Coreopsis, and rambunctious, generous ones that spread prolifically by seed or rhizome, like Wild Bergamot and Jerusalem Artichoke.

The resulting stands of large, dense biomass are bonanzas for insects and birds. Do try this at home!

### LOOK FOR:

- Bright White Snakeroot, which some consider a weed but is encouraged by Christopher
- A baby Prairie Dock plant inches from its parent
- The soaring Sunflower standing sentry on the sidewalk at the SW corner of the property

### Spring



### Autumn





## SUNSET SURPRISE

In May, Susan’s garden gave a model lesson in showcasing bold native plants like Rosinweed and Common Milkweed in a traditional neighborhood.

In autumn, this garden has a last “surprise” — the neat and orderly hedge that lines her long driveway all summer reveals itself to be an all-you-can-eat buffet of Aromatic Asters.

Other notable keystones: Stiff Goldenrod marking the west end of the house, and sprays of New England Aster providing pops of deep color all across the front (with bright purple Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)). And don’t miss the “living wall” of Cliff Goldenrod and Aromatic Aster.

### LOOK FOR:

- Fluffy “seedheads of Splitbeard Bluestem (*Andropogon ternarius*) along the driveway
- Reblooming Robin’s Plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*) on the east side path
- Two mature Buttonbushes in the backyard, exquisitely shaped by Susan’s sculptor eye

### Spring



Pink Primrose (*Oenothera speciosa*)

### Autumn



New England Aster & Aromatic Aster



Wild Indigo (*Baptisia australis*)



Aromatic Aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*)



Robin's Plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*)



Lead Plant (*Amorpha canescens*)



## NEW DIRECTION

In June, native standabouts in this garden, a frequent feature in garden society tours, included long-established Baptisia, Amsonia, Red Buckeye, Bottlebrush Buckeye, Anise Hyssop, Serviceberry, Staghorn Sumac and Common Milkweed.

Due to a change in direction to prioritize native plants and habitat support, Talis has incorporated many new native plants, including keystones like Aromatic Aster and Blue-Stemmed Goldenrod. These join existing keystone perennials like Canadian Goldenrod and New England Aster. Additionally, keystone shrubs have been added, like Sand Cherry, Chokecherry and Prairie Willow.

### LOOK FOR:

- The thriving new glade terrace
- Cliff Goldenrod on the stone wall.
- Conversion of the remaining front turf to native plantings, currently underway

### Spring



Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*)



Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)



Oakleaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)

### Autumn



Annual Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*)



Aromatic Aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*)



New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)



## ROELAND PARK REFUGE

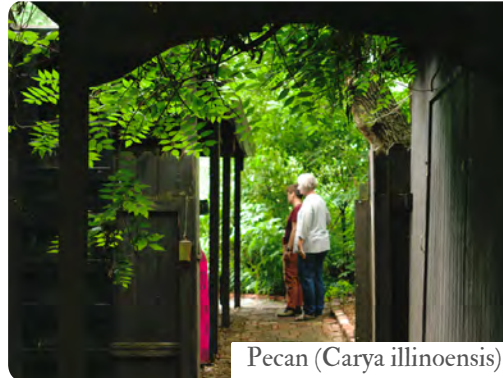
In June, Karen's backyard was the draw, a rich permaculture woodland of fruit, nut, and berry shrubs and trees around a serene pond. Food plants include Persimmon, Pawpaw, Pecan, Chokeberry, Elderberry and in addition to apple, cherry, Wild Plum and Chokeberry trees in the front yard.

In Autumn, the apple trees in her front yard are dwarfed by a wall of Jerusalem Artichoke and masses of New England Aster nearly as large as the VW camper in the driveway.

### LOOK FOR:

- Purple Passionflower Vine on the hoop alongside the driveway and Yellow Passionflower on the backyard arch
- Hazelnut hedge behind the backyard pond
- The back corner swale with berrying spicebushes

### Spring



### Autumn



# The Key to Keystones

What makes a plant a “keystone”? Plants provide wildlife not only with nectar and pollen, but also forage. Moths and butterflies (collectively the genus *Lepidoptera*) lay their eggs on native trees or perennials as a way of providing their offspring sustenance; emerging larvae will feed upon the foliage of their host plants. This is only one of myriad ways that the insects upon which our ecosystem depends, depend on native plants for their very existence. That’s why our motto is: *What you plant matters.*

But even among native plants, some are more beneficial than others. In fact, according to research led by entomologists Desiree Narango (a Deep Roots 2024 conference keynote speaker) and Douglas Tallamy, though keystones represent only 14% of native plant species, “they support a whopping 90% of the caterpillar population, making them crucial to the food web.”

The most valuable keystone native, by far, is the Oak (*Quercus*), which supports more than 500 species of *Lepidoptera*, among many ecosystem benefits. Not far behind Oak are native Cherry and Plum (*Prunus*), Willow (*Salix*), Birch (*Betula*), and Maple (*Acer*). As we saw in the September Habitat Garden Tour, layered borders of woody shrubs and understory trees provide crucial cover and shelter for wildlife. We can all add more native trees and shrubs to our landscapes, and autumn is a great time to do that.



Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)



Wild Plum (*Prunus americana*)



Prairie Willow (*Salix humilis*)



## KC Keystones : Trees & Shrubs

Monarch butterflies famously lay their eggs exclusively on Milkweed, but most other (90%) butterfly and moth species (Lepidoptera) lay theirs mostly on a few crucial native trees and shrubs (by # of species hosted):



Oak ( 436 )

Cherry/Plum ( 340 )

Willow ( 289 )

More Keystones



White Oak (*Quercus alba*)



Wild Plum (*Prunus americana*)



Prairie Willow (*Salix humilis*)



River Birch (*Betula nigra* - 284)



Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*)



Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)



Black Willow (*Salix nigra*)



Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum* - 238)



Chinkapin Oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*)



Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*)



Sandbar Willow (*Salix interior*)



Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinum* - 238)



## KC Keystones : Herbaceous Perennials

The three most valuable herbaceous perennials come into bloom in Autumn: Goldenrods, Asters, and Sunflowers. All three are drought-tolerant and low maintenance, even in tough spots like next to streets, driveways or sidewalks.

As development spreads and wild areas become fewer, the Goldenrods, Asters, and Sunflowers we grow in our yards are more important than ever. They will beautify your garden while also providing wildlife that crucial final feast before frost.

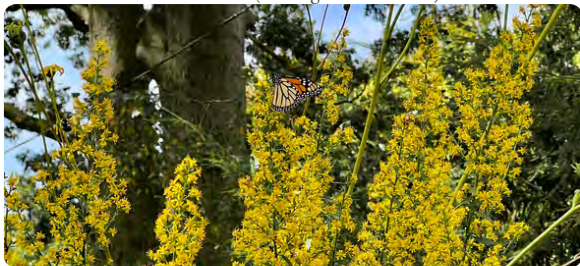
Goldenrod ( 146 )



Gray Goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*)



Cliff Goldenrod (*Solidago drummondii*)



Showy Goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*)

Aster ( 133 )



Aromatic Aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*)



Smooth Aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*)



New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novaeangliae*)

Sunflower ( 116 )



Western Sunflower (*Helianthus occidentalis*)



Jerusalem Artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*)



Maximilian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*)





## Big & Beautiful

*It's all about that Biomass.*

To the eyes of a hungry bird, our stretches of pristine lawn are tragically barren. With ever fewer sources of food and habitat, songbird populations have decreased by a third in our lifetime and are dwindling fast. How do we help? Shift your aesthetic, from *Neat* to *Replete*.

It's no accident that top keystone species like oaks, asters and goldenrod are big and abundant. Giant trees and large stands of lush-leafed, profusely blooming flowers:

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

In short, big is bountiful. Go home and go big!

*Jerusalem Artichoke (Helianthus tuberosus) in Christopher Leitch's garden. Photo by C. Leitch.*



# Ten Steps Everyone Can Take

*Pick a step and start today*

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. American lawns use 100 million tons of herbicide, insecticide and chemical fertilizer a year.
6. Be visible. Grow habitat gardens where people can see and help shift the landscaping aesthetic in Kansas City.
7. Minimize outdoor light pollution. Night lights kill.
8. Reduce disruptions like mowing and blowing.
9. Help caterpillars: Leave the leaves, grow soft landings.
10. Sharing is caring. Exercise your influence with your HOA, book club, church, business and friends.



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