Bringing Nature to Suburban & Urban Parks

Great Lakes Parks Training Institute
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Mow down those *@##!/%! WEEDS!
What’s the Rub?
If some of our residents don’t like it, Why Bother???

- Birds
- Butterflies
- Honey
- Color and texture
- Less mowing (less stink, noise, cost)
- Cleaner water
- Fewer chemicals in the park
- Cost containment (for all of us skin-flints)
- Nature study or at least observation

- However...
Force-feeding does not = friendship
Can nature and city life co-exist?
Yeah, but... How do we do it?
8 9 Great (?) Options

1. Corners and Slopes
2. Flowering Native Plants
3. Remote Spots
4. Butterfly Gardens
5. Landscape Beds
6. Supplement at first planting
7. Go low, go slow
8. Sign It!
9. Swales and road sides (formerly known as ditches)
Corners and slopes
Flowering Natives

Donnybrook Fen, Centerville
Perimeter prairie—Hitting the Corners
Butterfly Garden, and Sign

Humber Bay, Ontario, Canada
Landscape Beds
Go Low (and Sign it!)
Add Monarch Waystation
MONARCH WAYSTATION

This site provides milkweeds, nectar sources, and shelter needed to sustain monarch butterflies as they migrate through North America. Certified and registered by Monarch Watch as an official Monarch Waystation.

CREATE, CONSERVE, & PROTECT MONARCH HABITATS

www.MonarchWatch.org
Bio-swale
Pitfalls to avoid
Don’t do these, unless you like pain and conflict!

- Plant next to back yards
- Start in a highly visible spot
- Plant a huge area
- Plant without a plan to control “invasives”
- Don’t tell anyone what you’re planning to do
- Do it alone
Helpful Hints

- Partner with a youth group
  - Scouts
  - High School
  - Church youth group, etc.
- Try large planters at first
- Partner with an environmental club or garden club
- Start small
- Experiment with landscape beds around buildings

- Build bio-swales/rain gardens in parking lots
- Pond bank stabilization
- Get outside funding
Do you need a naturalist?

- Not really
- Friends
- Garden Clubs
- Forest Preserve staff, zoo staff, arboretum staff and consultants

In fact, the naturalist may be a little too educated and passionate!
Soften the blow

• No matter what you do, somebody will raise a stink

• What to do?
  ➢ Move it
  ➢ Change the plant mixture
  ➢ Reduce it
  ➢ Screen it (sounds dumb, I know)

➢ Blessed are the flexible…
What Else?

Be Smart

• Reforestation is an option to bring “nature” to parks
• Advocates could include birders, hikers, backpackers and campers in your community
• Incremental growth, expansion
• Find the sweet spot in your community
Quick Review
You CAN do it!

- Enlist some allies
- Start small
- Be flexible
- Don’t force-feed
- Enjoy the accolades!
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