

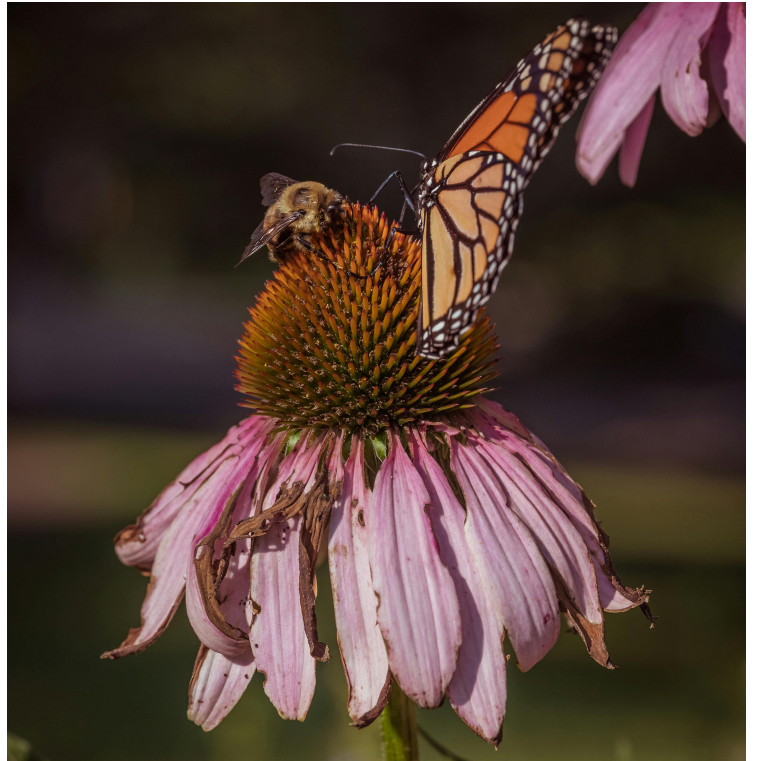
CHAMPIONS FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Ordinary people taking extraordinary action

JAY DYNES PROTECTS HABITAT ONE FOOT AT A TIME

Growing up in Hamilton, Ontario, Jay Dynes and his friends enjoyed spending time at Red Hill Creek, which flowed over the escarpment at Albion Falls and eventually into Lake Ontario. When he was about 12 years old, he and his friends returned to their nature refuge to find that the creek and surrounding area had been excavated to make way for a new freeway. Jay was devastated, even as he tried to rescue crayfish and frogs from the remnants of the creek. The loss made him feel powerless over the destruction of nature. It was not until many years later that he discovered that he could play an active role in protecting nature.

In early 2021, while doing online research related to his work as a researcher at the Canadian Light Source, Jay came across information from Doug Tallamy, an American entomologist, on the importance of native plants in creating habitats that support our native pollinators. He also learned about the decline of insects throughout the world and that native insects do not utilize non-native plants very efficiently—in many cases not at all, which endangers their survival. This was all an eye-opener for Jay. While he and his wife Karen had long had non-native flower beds in their yard, they had never considered the impact of the types of plants on insects. He set out to learn more about establishing a native plant garden, finding lots of information online from Wild About Saskatoon's Pollinator Paradise program. Furthermore, he found that the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan had many resources, including sources of seeds and plants. Armed with his new knowledge and a desire to attract monarch butterflies and bumblebees, his favourite insects, Jay decided to do his part.



He began his native plant garden adventure in August 2021, by manually removing sod one foot at a time from about 100 ft² of his front yard using a shovel and a wheelbarrow. In November, he spread seeds of more than twenty species of native plants on the soil, as many native plants need a cold spell before they will germinate. By the next June, the first plants were coming up, although initially some were hard to identify.

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Nevertheless, he removed the remainder of the sod, about 400 ft², in the front yard and seeded the area to non-native buckwheat to protect the exposed soil until seeding in the fall with native plants. Later that summer 30 people visited his garden, as part of a tour organized by Pollinator Paradise.

Despite some setbacks, Jay's native plant garden adventure continues. The native plant garden let him support nature in a small, but not insignificant, way and is his way of buffering the ongoing downgrading of nature. In just three years, he has replaced the entire front yard lawn with black-eyed Susan, wild blue flax, bergamot and numerous types of milkweeds, perennial sunflowers, asters, goldenrods and other native species. Even Karen, who was initially skeptical of Jay's plans, is seeing the benefits of the native plants, including increased bird and insect activity in the yard. So far, three of Saskatchewan's 27 species of bumblebee have appeared, though Jay is still waiting to spot his first Monarch butterfly. The adventure continues.

This column is a collaborative project of the Saskatchewan Environmental Society and the Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development – RCE Saskatchewan.



Saskatchewan Environmental Society

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