

C H A U T A U Q U A



BIRD
TREE
&
GARDEN
CLUB



**What's
in
Bloom?**

Goldenrod

...The More You Know

By Betsy Burgeson
Supervisor of Gardens and Landscapes

If you have ever been on one of my garden tours, then you have most likely heard me sing praises for the genus ***Solidago* -the Goldenrods**.

I never realized just how beautiful and ecologically important of a plant they truly are until about 15 years ago and now, the more I learn about them the more I LOVE about them. I was trying to figure out the best way to write about all of their wonderful attributes but instead of me going on & on using word play to try to highlight all of their incredibleness (not a real word I know – another reason I opted out of word play!) I will let just a few of the crazy cool fun facts, that perhaps you didn't know about goldenrod, speak for themselves, luring you into discovering more and wanting to plant goldenrods in your own gardens.

HOWEVER, before I can start listing off the fun facts, I need to deal with the elephant in the article, the **myth of all myths....ALLERGIES** (caused by goldenrod that is) Here is an excerpt from The New England Wild Flower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers that explains why we **shouldn't be blaming our fall allergies on the bright shiny star of the autumn show**. "Convincing gardeners to grow goldenrods is a bit like trying to sell Toyotas in Detroit, but I will continue anyway. They are certainly ubiquitous in the fall landscape and are still **wrongly accused of causing hay fever**. Therefore, it bears repeating that goldenrods, like aster, Joe-Pye, ironweeds, and all the Composites, are insect-pollinated, so **their pollen is heavy and sticky** in order to facilitate transfer by our six-legged friends. It is the wind-pollinated plants like grasses, ragweed and many trees (I am allergic to maples for example) that produce the great quantities of light, airborne pollen that get into our noses and throats and cause the immune reaction known as hay fever."

There, now that our preconceived notions of goldenrod are gone, let me help

bring you over to the sunny side with these amazing facts about *Solidago spp.*

- The scientific name of goldenrod, "solidago", originates from Latin word "**solidare**" which means "**to make whole**" referring to the fact that goldenrod has excellent potential to **heal wounds**. It is also known as **woundwort**.
- Native Americans chewed leaves of goldenrods to **alleviate symptoms of toothache**. They used root in treatment of **sore throat** and tea in treatment of **fatigue**.
- After the Boston Tea Party, goldenrod tea became known as "**liberty tea**" and was imbibed by the colonists to protest British taxation.
- Goldenrod was once so popular that it was in the running for **America's national flower**.
- Goldenrod seeds are **beloved by birds**, including goldfinches, indigo buntings, grosbeaks, and nuthatches.
- Goldenrod is **#1 KEYSTONE perennial** in the Eastern Temperate Forest Ecosystem (~1/3rd of US) – supporting over 100 moth & butterfly species alone. Click [here](#) for more info on Keystone Native Plants.
- In the [language of flowers](#), goldenrod symbolizes **treasure and good fortune!**
- There are goldenrods for every situation; **tall, short, sunny, shady, rocky or wet**. Woodland natives like blue-stemmed goldenrod (*S. caesia*) and zigzag goldenrod (*S. flexicaulis*) will even bloom in fairly deep shade.
- Not all goldenrods are created equal. By choosing **clump-forming species** such as stiff goldenrod you can enjoy all the benefits in your garden without the aggressiveness and high maintenance of species like Canada Goldenrod, *S. canadensis*.
- Some insects treat goldenrods as their very own dream homes, forcing the plants to create "rooms" for them. One of these insects is the goldenrod gall fly (*Eurosta solidaginis*). The adult female fly injects her eggs into a goldenrod stem. As the larvae grow and eat, a chemical in their saliva makes the stem form a spherical structure called a gall, this **living nursery** can reach the size of a golf ball!

And if these facts weren't cool enough, here's one that blew my mind: **Thomas**

Edison made tires for the car (Ford Model T) using the **rubber extracted from the leaves of goldenrods!!!!**

Hopefully you have a new outlook and appreciation for goldenrod now and even if you were a fan before, I hope you have learned something else to love about it.

The golden blaze of Autumn is starting to fade here on the grounds but the benefits of all those glorious golden blooms will live on and I am proud to know we have made an impact. The scientific name couldn't be more appropriate as I **feel that we have started to "make whole" the ecosystems within our landscapes by simply embracing *Solidago*.**

- photo and text by Betsy Burgeson

[Goldenrod Article from the National Gardening Association Learning Library](#) that describes some of the goldenrod species that are good for gardens.

Looking for other great natives? Check out this plant finder [Native Plant Trust Plant Finder](#)

W h a t ' s
A -
F l u t t e r ?



Chautauqua Lake Central School: The Monarch Project Revisited

by Jack and Diane Voelker

In January of 2014, we had the good fortune to travel to the Sierra Madre Mountains of central Mexico, the remote winter home to millions of Monarch butterflies and the endpoint of their annual 2500 mile migration. It really was a life altering experience and an incredible journey. Prior to that adventure, we had learned that the North American monarch population had dropped nearly 90% in just 20 years. Massive loss of habitat due to increasing use of herbicides and pesticides in commercial farming, the effects of climate change, droughts, floods and extreme weather, and continuing suburban sprawl all contributed to the precipitous decline. With these overwhelming challenges seemingly beyond our ability to help, we sought some way to participate in solutions that could be hands-on and local. It was time to go back to school.

Our local school district, Chautauqua Lake Central, welcomed our ideas and encouraged our plans. We settled on targeting fourth graders. It was a good fit in their science curriculum, we had enthusiastic and committed teachers to work with and we all felt that 10 year olds could not only grasp the important issues, but they also had years ahead of them to grow as monarch advocates and environmental stewards.

The Monarch Project has four parts. The first is a classroom presentation to each of the fourth grades. Using our own photos and on-line resources, Di created an ever-evolving PowerPoint, allowing us to cover everything from life cycle and metamorphosis, to our trip to Mexico and the story of the migration, to the serious challenges facing these iconic creatures. The second component, in late winter, is the planting of milkweed seeds. Milkweed is the *only* host plant for monarch eggs and caterpillars. No milkweed, no monarchs. Habitat restoration is an overriding theme for our project. The students plant literally thousands of seeds (milkweed has a very low germination rate) and then care for them in the classrooms. The third phase has been the creation and enhancement of a butterfly garden, located near the entrance to the Elementary wing. The students plant some of the seedlings they've grown and we also add nectar plants each year. The garden is now a certified Monarch Waystation by Monarch Watch of the University of Kansas (as are multiple private and Institution gardens across the grounds). The final stage of the project is about to unfold as we write this story. During the first week of school each year, we invite all the now fifth graders and all the new fourth graders to join us at the garden for a release of a butterfly or two. The students always cheer and shout "Adios!" as the butterflies start their journey to Mexico.

The Monarch Project enters its eighth year. The school garden is now a mature mixture of swamp and common milkweed plus nectar plants, and a welcome haven not only for butterflies but all sorts of insect life. "No mow zones" have further expanded wild habitat. Jeff Tome from the Audubon Community Center in Jamestown recently wrote that when he presents programs at the school he finds the educational value of the garden and those wild zones to be immense, and a welcome change from the typical mowed school lawns. We see our school project as a perfect complement to the innovative monarch programs

and advocacy demonstrated by the BTG and its members, and by the wonderful work of Betsy Burgeson on the Institution grounds. And at this year's release, we'll be meeting with a representative of the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy to explore a new partnership with the school that can further our work.

Because of the school project and the materials and information we've gathered along the way, we now also present frequent programs to Road Scholar groups at Chautauqua. Most importantly, with each opportunity we continue to find new allies and progress in support of the iconic monarch butterfly.

[Grandparent footnote: our eldest grandchild, now a junior, was in that first fourth grade program. Her youngest sibling is in this year's fourth grade. Bonus.]

- photos and text by Jack and Diane Voelker

What's Afloat?

The Common Loon (*Gavia immer*)

The best way to begin to identify a loon is to note its **low-riding body** while paddling in the water.

Loons also **dive for fish by swimming fully underwater, and they typically consume their catch before resurfacing.** These two characteristics alone will eliminate most water birds from consideration. (However, **double-crested cormorants** also meet these two criteria and can be found on Chautauqua Lake.)

To distinguish the loon from the cormorant, note their **plumage, which is gray and top and white underneath** (in summer, their breeding plumage looks a bit like they are sporting a tuxedo). Double-crested cormorants, on the other hand, are basically solid black. Interestingly, common loons are flightless for a couple of weeks mid-winter while all of their feathers are replaced.

Loons require a long runway to take off and will run across the water surface flapping their wings for rather long distances, especially if they are fighting a head-wind. While loons are good swimmers and flyers, they are not very adept at walking.

Loons are [famous for their yodeling](#), which some people find beautiful and others find haunting. They are quieter outside of breeding season.

Lydia Strohl [shared this video](#) of a group of juvenile common loons swimming in Chautauqua Lake. Called a “**social gathering**,” **juveniles** hang out together once their parents have left them at about 12 weeks of age. And in this case, they behaved very much like bickering siblings. Quite funny!

- Jennifer Francois, BTG VP

The 2022 Season ...in Photos & Numbers



276 Purple Martins fledged under the careful watch of Jack Gulvin in 2022. The martins laid **336** eggs and **310** hatched. Jack hosted **4** Purple Martin Chats on Thursday afternoons at the Martin Nests by the Sports Club for about **30** people a week.

In his very popular Wednesday Tree Walks, Jack introduced over **400** Chautauquans to **36** different tree species.

In addition to the Thursday Chats, Jack answers **countless** questions during the week as he lowers the houses to check and clean them.

You may have also seen Jack collecting aluminum cans around grounds. Last year he collected **200,000** cans and this year he is on track to collect **even more**. He sends most of the money he earns from the metals to the Purple Martin Conservation Association (**\$8,000** in 2022). Jack is truly a gift to the birds and people of Chautauqua.



BTG Naturalist Jack Gulvin led weekly **Tree Walks** on Wednesdays, **Purple Martin Chats** on Thursdays, and **Nature Walks** on Fridays. In total, almost **600** people were treated to a "Jack event" this summer.



Joe McMaster led a very popular Garden Walk every Tuesday afternoon for about **40** people each week. Over **400** people got to enjoy his humor and deep knowledge this summer.



Bob Jeffrey address a crowd of **300** at Smith Wilkes Hall on Tuesday, July 12, 2022 as part of our weekly [Brown Bag Speaker Series](#).

In total, **1,382** people attend the **8** Brown Bag Lectures.

The Tuesday speakers were Ken Blankenship, John Wenzel, Bob Jeffrey, Heather Wolf, Sandy Clinton, Marta McDowell, Doug Tallamy, and Paul Tukey.



Betsy Burgeson led weekly **Garden Walks** on Fridays at 12:30pm. Here's the crowd following our Pied Piper through University Park and learning about the Rain Gardens. About **70** people attended her Garden Walks each week.

In the course of the season, Betsy led us through tours of **six** different gardens: Fletcher Rain Garden, the Discovery Garden, the Shipman Miller Cottage Garden, the Amp Gardens, the Children's School Gardens, and the University Park Rain Gardens.

* Special thanks to Gardens Crew Member **Coby Miller** who filled in for Betsy Week Six and taught us about the newly-renovated **Rappole Night Garden at Smith Wilkes Hall**.



Over **150** people attended an Evening Walk to listen for the sounds of wildlife and insects. The walk was led by Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy's **Twan Leenders**. Three days later, **150** more turned up for a bat listening walk led by **Jonathon Townsend**. We were shocked by the huge turnouts and will schedule more Night Walks in 2023.



The 2022 House & Garden Tour was a great success! We reduced the available tickets by **25%** in order to limit the risk of Covid transmission inside the houses and minimize the lines outside. The overwhelming feedback was that everyone definitely appreciated the shorter lines. While we can't be sure that the reduced attendance also helped tamp down Covid transmission, we still plan to keep the attendance numbers lower again in 2024 to keep the people happy!

The 2024 House & Garden Tour will be on July 11, 2024. Might as well put it in your calendar now!



Kathy Clingan and Barbara Georgescu - 2 happy patrons on House & Gardens Tour Day.



16 Chautauqua County Master Gardeners volunteered to be Garden Docents for **5** of the Gardens on Tour and did a tremendous job interacting with **453** contacts in the gardens that day. Above: Mary Rees introduces visitors to the University Park Rain Garden.



Many of the BTG's **Nature Partners** attended our Annual Lunch on August 5 in the Athenaeum Parlor. Pictured above: **Mark Wenzler**, Director of the Climate Change Initiative at Chautauqua, **Jeanne Wiebenga**, our luncheon speaker and now board member (yay!), **Becky Nystrom** Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy Founder and Director Emerita, **Jennifer Francois**, BTG VP, **Betsy Burgeson** Supervisor of Gardens and Landscapes at Chautauqua, and **Arthur Pearson**, CEO of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute.

Nominating Update

By Liz Keogh, Nominating Chair

The Board of the BTG is sad to bid farewell to **Suzanne Aldrich**, **Mary Lou Parlato** and **Vince Zaleski**. Their contributions have been felt throughout the BTG and Chautauqua, as a whole, and we will continue to benefit from their efforts for many summers to come!

- **Suzanne held positions ranging from Communications Chair to President, and seems to have lent a hand with everything in between! During her tenure, the Arboretum was enhanced, newsletters were expanded, BTG's relationship with the Daily was strengthened and funds were raised to install a rain garden behind Norton Hall. Most recently, Suzanne served as Corresponding Secretary and Chair of the Annual Life Members Luncheon. Thank you Suzanne!**
- **As BTG's Vice President, Mary Lou led the charge of BTG's significant programming efforts for the past several years. Using her world class logistical skills and strong relationships with the Administration, Mary Lou coordinated lake talks, nature walks, brown bag lectures and purple martin chats galore! Many thanks for your service to the BTG Mary Lou!**
- **Vince served as BTG's Treasurer for the past several years where he kept us all on budget and always communicated financial issues with a smile. He always lends a helping hand, whether it be making mushroom sandwiches, helping out with the house and garden tour or any other BTG event! Thanks so much for all you've done Vince!**

We are honored and excited to welcome Dede Trefts-McEvoy, Jeanne Wiebenga, Courtney Byrne and Lynette Caplice to the BTG Board! We are confident that they will contribute to moving the BTG forward in meaningful ways!



Drooping Lilies

Remembering Joan Smith

I did not know Joan Smith, but after reading her magnificent obituary, I regret that I never rode over Thunder Bridge to boldly knock on her door and introduce myself.

Though I did not know Joan, I was familiar with her through the trees she planted. In working on the *exploreCHQ app*, I had written about several of the trees she planted in Chautauqua as part of the American Forests Historic Tree Program, most notably the Maquon Bur Oak in Joan's own garden. The more I researched the trees of Chautauqua, the more I encountered her name. Naturally, I felt the cosmic kinship of a fellow tree lover.

Last winter, when I became president of the BTG, I began sifting and sorting through boxes of materials trying to understand this organization and just what I had gotten myself into. (In over my head was the very clear answer!) One of the things I found was a single sheet of paper outlining highlights of the history of the BTG. It was signed and dated by Joan. It was concise, clearly written and very well organized. (As the less well-organized sort of bear myself, of course I cannot find it now. But when I do, I will post it on our website.) The BTG has a long and rich history and the amount of archival material is frankly somewhat overwhelming, yet Joan was able to distill all that content into a one-pager. This seemed like a superpower to me.

It turns out that Joan had many superpowers. In case you haven't had a chance to read

her obituary, I have excerpted some of it below - especially the parts that relate to the BTG. You can read the full obituary by [clicking here](#).

Joan served as a board member for Chautauqua's Bird, Tree and Garden Club for sixteen years where she was the inspiration and coordinator for the Fire Circle and Nature Classrooms in the Thunder Bridge Ravine; her path sign at the end of the bridge still guides all to find these places in the beautiful, wooded ravine. Joan invited and hosted many Native American leaders to speak at Chautauqua, she brought several historical American Forest trees to be planted on the Grounds of Chautauqua, and protected and commissioned the planting of many trees.

A memorial service will be held in the summer of 2023 at the Hall of Philosophy on Saturday, July 8 at 11am. Burial will be in the Chautauqua Cemetery. An online memorial is available here for those who wish to share memories. A bench has been donated in her honor to be placed with a view of the lake at Chautauqua.

Memorial contributions can be made to the Chautauqua Bird, Tree, and Garden Club by planting a tree – especially one dedicated to someone you love (she planted one for each grandchild and great-grandchild).

- Leslie Renjilian
- photo below of Joan Smith from the Grapevine
- photo above of "drooping lilies" by Angela James. Yes, it's actually Solomon's Seal, but it looked so much prettier than actual drooping lilies that we took some license.

