



THE SCHOMBERG COMMUNITY FARM NATIVE PLANT Butterfly Garden

A short story on how it came to be . . . delivered at the official opening ceremony.

I started this garden mid August 2018. You may recall . . . it was scorching hot, with unrelenting sunshine and not a drop of rain for weeks.

For that reason, I call it the garden I “accidentally” made because I didn’t really intend to take on such a big project under such miserable conditions.

And it was a big project ... about 2000 square feet. It was dug and planted, laid out and mulched by hand, entirely by volunteers.

I probably would have abandoned the whole thing if a fellow community gardener hadn’t brought me loads of cardboard the exact shape and size I required to map out a circle.

And speaking of circles . . . that’s what I called it . . . right up until it’s official opening . . . the circle garden . . . I did this in order to clearly differentiate it in board discussions from the “other” butterfly garden at the entrance to the garden plots.

And speaking more about circles . . . I would never have laid it out as such, except that that was the shape that had been

settled on long before my involvement.

And Native Plants . . . what the heck are those? And why?

Start such a garden in August? Insanity! And you want it divided in 4 equal quadrants, 2 of which are exclusively native plants, 1 domestic herbs, and 1 wheelchair accessible.

Madness!

Well mad I am I guess . . . because one sweltering night, 4 or 5 of us started moving the mountain of soil which had been sitting on the grass for 3 months.

A couple of hot and humid weeks later the circle garden began to take shape.

Wheelchair accessible dropped out of the picture because that was well beyond my pay grade and level of expertise.

Mid September, on another sweltering Thursday afternoon, Kristen of Tottenham Native Plants dropped off 239 seedlings. That night about ten people



came out to plant them based on some unorthodox garden plan I had plotted out with little white venetian blind stakes.

Ruth and her granddaughter were there that night. I thought they were just responsible and community minded garden rental volunteers.

I still had no idea that we were actually planting the Ruth MacDonald Butterfly Garden.

Perhaps if I had known that, I may not have taken on the task . . .

I’ve gotten to know Ruth a bit this past year and I realize she is a bit of a stickler for neatness and order.

She maintains the most amazing gardens over at the Chestnut manor. They are beautifully manicured and precisely laid out.

They are a tremendous amount of work and reflect it.

And . . . *THERE IS NOT A WEED IN SIGHT!*

Well, sad to say Ruth, this garden will definitely have lots of weeds and will look a bit unruly and wild most of the time.

BUT, if you come here on a sunny July, August or September afternoon you will see hundreds of butterflies (mostly Monarchs), you will see and hear bees and birds and crickets and grasshoppers.

If you come in the evening, you might find an amorous couple sitting on the bench under our makeshift trellis.

If you come in spring there may be duck nests and eggs, bloodroot and prairie smoke.

If you come in the morning, a man might be sitting under the trellis reading a book.

Soccer nights, kids wander over to check for fireflies.

Sunny late summer afternoons, young girls come to take selfies with the giant sunflowers, joe pyeweed and cup plants.

I have no idea what happens after dark, but it might involve teenagers being teenagers.

I personally want to thank Mary and Ruth for giving me an opportunity to do something out of the ordinary . . . and for compelling me to learn a lot really fast about native plants,

Which, by the way are actually incredibly interesting, delicate, beautiful and fleeting.

Donna Parrish,

*The accidental garden designer
(Also accidental designer of the sign.)*