

## **Backyard Conservation and Habitat Creation:**

### **It is not a difficult thing to do.**

All you have to do is plan a little, think about incorporating some native plants into your landscape.....and begin!

### **Some General Thoughts**

**Be aware of inputs and outputs** – Take a step back and review what you already have and what you are already doing in your yard.

**INPUTS** – Do you really need to use all that pesticide & fertilizer or can you cut back to a few select spots that truly need some help? Are the plants that you are putting in the ground irrigation-dependent or can they withstand some dry and hot weather?

**OUTPUTS**- Are you sending compostable items to a landfill? What is in the storm water runoff that comes from your yard? Where does the grass you cut end up? Is it going down the storm water drain?

### **What is your train of thought?**

**Embracing natural processes** – Plants, dead and alive do more than just look pretty. Dead trees provide habitat, old plant stems left over the winter provide food and shelter for many animals, larvae and eggs. Not everything has to be removed when it is no longer blooming. Insects are also important players to be admired; chewed leaves, webbing, and nests etc are signs of a functioning habitat. Not all bugs are bad.

### **Basics to get you started**

#### **Incorporate native plants into the landscape:**

Seed, bare root/potted plants, or a combo of the two. Takes 2 – 3 years to develop, usually goes thru an “ugly duckling” phase – include quick-flowering species as “cover crop” to help get thru this stage. Emphasize diversity of species, bloom times, and plant forms. You can mix natives with annuals.

Beware “meadow in a can” mixes – these invariably have non-native and (cheap/readily available) species and are guaranteed to fail

Rain gardens/bio cells: plantings that temporarily pond rainwater and let it seep into the ground rather than flowing directly to the storm sewer. Purifies pollutants in the process!

Filter strips or swales in areas where storm water pools naturally – if you have a wet spot somewhere, turn it into habitat and forget about trying to mow it or drain it.

Pond edging – a 3 ft. (or more) tall fringe of plants will deter geese and improve habitat

Don't forget shrubs – there are numerous great native understory species

#### **Provide Habitat: Food, shelter, water, living space...build it and they will come!**

Replace lawn grass with plants that provide food, shelter, or nesting space (native forbs and grasses, trees and shrubs) for birds, butterflies, other insects etc.

Add water for birds, butterflies and other insects.

Leave a dead tree standing for habitat.

Select some plants species rich in nectar for hummingbirds, butterflies and bees

Place a bird house, bat house or even a toad house in your yard

**How Small is too small?**

There is no such thing as too small

Small is a good starting point, you can always add and do more

Islands of small areas across a big area can help create a corridor for animals