

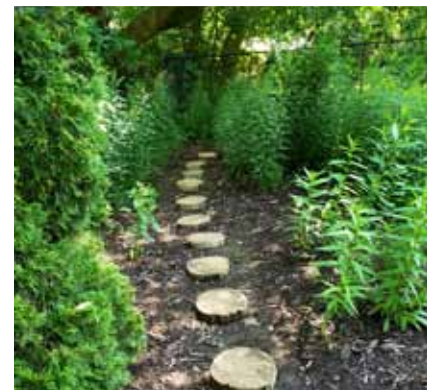
**L**ast year, my family and I created a garden filled with native plants after making space in an overgrown, weed-infested piece of our yard. It was a lot of back-breaking work, but so rewarding to see the plants grow and pollinators return to this area that we'd neglected for so long.

*By Kathryn Stocks*

# Bringing pollinators back



Cardinal flower is a favourite for hummingbirds.



**1** My family and I took on the task of creating a fabulous native garden last year at the bottom of our yard beyond the stream. We started by clearing the middle third of the thick mass of weeds to make room for new native plants. As we dug, we discovered goldenrod, marsh marigolds, New England asters and jewelweed, which we left because they're all native.

**2** When it was cleared, we planted Michigan lilies, swamp milkweed, Canadian germander, blue lobelia, cardinal flower, blue flag iris and bottle gentian. We also added the shrubs buttonbush, rose mallow and elderberry. These plants all do well in moist soil.

**3** The plants looked so tiny at first but by June they were coming along nicely. I knew native plants have a tendency to just put down roots their first year so I was pleasantly surprised when the six Michigan lily plants bloomed. Their droopy orange heads were quite lovely.

**4** At the end of July the garden was mostly green with only the milkweed and Canadian germander blooming. My husband, Robin, cut down a large willow tree that had fallen into our yard from the ravine. We used the circles cut from the trunk to create a footpath through the back of the new garden.



**5** Also at the end of July, a swamp milkweed plant started to bloom. It had one flower and I saw a monarch butterfly perched on it shortly after I noticed it. That didn't take long!

One of the cardinal flowers and all the blue lobelias were beginning to bloom at that time. The cardinal flower was especially vibrant.

**6** The garden was at its peak near the end of August. The goldenrod flanked the Canadian germander, blue lobelia and cardinal flower, which were all blooming.

All was not perfect because deer had found the smorgasbord we planted and started nibbling. They preferred the shrubs and we had to protect the buttonbush, rose mallow and elderberry with chicken wire.

**7** In early October, the garden was winding down and the swamp milkweed leaves were turning colour. But that didn't stop me. Over the summer we had cleared out much of the rest of the area and in October I was buying more plants! Just a warning: native plants can become addictive.

**8** This sneezeweed had just been planted when a bumblebee discovered it. It's a good reminder that when you plant flowers for our pollinators, they will find them. They need the native plants because these are the ones they evolved with. So take a look around your yard and plan to add a few natives to your garden this year. You don't have to pull out your non-natives, just add natives to the mix.

**Important tip for native plants: the first year they sleep, the second year they creep, and the third year they leap.**