

ROLAND PARK NEWS

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Conservation Landscaping: Maintaining the Beauty of Roland Park

By **Kate Culotta**

As I sit to write this, we're in the midst of a heat wave. You remember the one—mid-July, temperatures in the upper 90s, sky-high humidity.

It's been a wet summer for sure; shrubs and trees are doing okay, but people, pets and flowering pots are completely wilted. As I gaze across the street, I can't help but notice that two neighboring front yards look fantastic and there's not a blade of grass between the two. On closer look, I see that both neighbors have



Joan Freedman's eye-catching front porch. Photo: Kate Culotta

On closer look, I see that both neighbors have replaced the traditional grass lawn with perennial beds loaded with native plants beneath ornamental trees and shrubs.

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I stop by for a friendly front porch chat with Hawthorn Road resident Joan Freedman.

"Sure is hot!"

"How much watering have you done to keep your flowers looking like this?"

"Not a bit. Soaker hose from the rain barrel does the watering when needed."

"Whoa," I think. No mowing, no reseeding, no sprinkler.

I decided to stay for a few more questions.

Joan started her front garden last year, but she'd been living next to one for years. Neighbors Robin and David Kantor started their perennial-filled front garden 13 years ago. Robin enlisted the services of Sunshine Tree and Landscape from Timonium to help with the design and to do the initial planting. Sunshine's owner, Jennifer Heinstadt, also planned and built the stone wall. Employ the Earth's Mark Lutz and his employees help to maintain the garden.

Robin explained that, in the beginning, she didn't pay much attention

to choosing native plants, but as she's become more familiar with native choices, several plants have been swapped out. Now Echinacea, Heuchera and native ornamental tall grasses share space with the earlier plants. Robin admits she doesn't do much maintenance during the dormant season. Dead wood gets pruned a little, shrubs get a trim, everything gets a fresh coat of mulch and the garden is ready for a new season.

When I stopped to chat with Joan, I did catch her doing a bit of weeding and deadheading, but she confided that she doesn't do it often. As I mentioned, she's lived next door to the Kantors for years and in that time, plants have begun a friendly creep across the yard. When an old front yard tree died, however, and then a troublesome evergreen was removed, Joan and her family decided to take the gardening plunge.

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Autumn Leaves at Robert E. Lee Park

By Nancy Worden Horst

With cooler weather on its way, activities ramp up at Robert E. Lee Park. Park rangers and volunteers have planned programs for people of all ages and interests to enjoy. Activities include a history walk, a fall campfire, bird walks with the Baltimore Bird Club, activities for seniors, including "senior strolls," the Halloween Hike and a "pioneer life" program featuring candle dipping, log cabin building and corn husk doll-making. For more information about the programs or to register, please visit the Park's new website, www.relpnc.org.



"Hike the Serpentine," a popular organized walk through Robert E. Lee Park. Photo: Ranger Bart Viguers

The popular Baltimore County Parks' program, "Nature Quest", is also in full swing. Start your quest by picking up a Nature Quest Passport at participating parks, your local Wegmans grocery store, or online at www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/recreation/programdivision/naturearea/index.html.



Enjoy the wildlife in Robert E. Lee Park
Photo: Ranger Bart Viguers

The Passport directs participants to the various outdoor opportunities available at five of the County's parks. Travel the trails at Robert E. Lee and Cromwell Valley Parks, Marshy Point and Oregon Ridge Nature

Centers and Benjamin Banneker Historical Park. After venturing on one of the suggested hiking, biking or canoeing quests, participants record their adventures in the Passport. Two such adventures, hiking the Railroad Trail and canoeing the Willow Island Trail, take place in Robert E. Lee Park.

After completing five quests, participants gain free admission to "Nature Quest Fest" on November 2, 2013 at Robert E. Lee Park, and are also eligible to win prizes. Check the County website for more details and launch your family's quest for nature's riches right here in our neighborhood park. ❖

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Welcome New Neighbors!

(May through July)

- Marin Alsop and Kristin Jurkscheit, 401 Woodlawn Road
 Kimberley Bartel and Matthew Edgar, 22 Merrymount Road
 Emily and Michael Boss, 4721 Keswick Road
 Andrea and Christopher Cortright, 604 Somerset Road
 Katherine Embry and Thomas Webb, 3820 Beech Avenue
 Lauren Erickson and Christopher Caquelin, 4302 Roland Avenue
 Stacie Sanders Evans and Benjamin Evans, 5004 Roland Avenue
 Jennifer and Ian Guertin, 560 W. University Pkwy.
 Katie and Joseph McAvoy, 5411 Falls Road Terrace
 Pria Narasimham and Brian Smithling, 3930 Beech Avenue
 Amber Ssazar Nestico and Philip Nestico, 419 Woodlawn Road
 Shira Robinson and Joshua Kurlantzick, 206 Hawthorn Road

Check Out the Baltimore Checkerspot

by Nancy Worden Horst

The spectacular Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly, *Euphydryas phaeton Drury*, is an increasingly rare butterfly inhabiting marshy areas in the eastern United States. Recognized as the Maryland State insect, the Checkerspot is responsible for pollinating a variety of local plants, but several factors have contributed to its decline. Chief among them is habitat degradation, largely



An adult Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly. Photo: Ranger Bart Viguers

caused by over-browsing deer, invasive plants and drained wetlands.

To promote greater public awareness of the threats to this butterfly, several local organizations have begun programs for captive breeding and release of the Checkerspot, as well as wetland restoration. Others are monitoring the Checkerspot population in the wild to ascertain their health and relationship to their habitat. Since 2012, lepidopterists (scientists who study moths and butterflies), naturalists and volunteers throughout the state have banded together under the aegis of Maryland's Natural Heritage Program to develop a practical, scientifically sound and collaborative conservation strategy to protect and sustain the Checkerspot population.

Life-Cycle of the Baltimore Checkerspot

After mating in June, Baltimore Checkerspot females deposit clusters of eggs on the undersides of the leaves of white turtlehead, *Chelone glabra*. During her one- to three-week



A caterpillar feeding on white turtleweed. Photo: Ranger Bart Viguers

lifetime, a female Checkerspot may lay multiple egg clusters, each containing hundreds of eggs. The eggs develop during the next 20 days before hatching into caterpillars (larvae).

These larvae begin feeding and building a communal web to provide protection from predators, often at the end of a turtlehead leaf. In August, the caterpillars stop feeding and enter diapause, a slow-down of their metabolisms. At the end of October, the caterpillars move out of the web and descend to the leaf litter below to spend the winter. As the weather warms in early spring, the caterpillars return to the plants and begin feeding again.

Well-fed caterpillars enter the chrysalis stage in May, develop into butterflies and perpetuate the breeding cycle. Adult Checkerspots feed on a variety of plants, including common milkweed, dogbane, oxeye and penstemons (see p. 24).

The Maryland Checkerspot Recovery Project

The Checkerspot Recovery Project involves ecologists, naturalists and volunteers throughout Maryland. With the Baltimore Checkerspot Recovery Team and other state and county agencies, participants conduct surveys of wild butterfly colonies and

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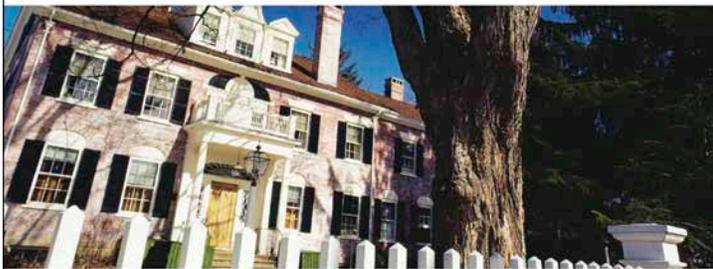
Recognized as the Maryland State insect, the Checkerspot is responsible for pollinating a variety of local plants, but several factors have contributed to its decline.



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Baltimore Checkerspot

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Caterpillars enter the chrysalis stage in May.
Photo: Ranger Bart Viguers

their habitats, evaluate potential reintroduction sites and determine the most effective methods of reintroduction. Sites able to sustain turtlehead, as well as other nectar plants, are the most suitable – but only if invasive species can be controlled and browsing deer can be restricted. For more information on this statewide project, please visit www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Plants_Wildlife/BaltimoreCheckerspot.asp.

The Checkerspot Recovery Project at Robert E. Lee Park

This past winter, volunteer Howdy Knipp and park rangers built a wood-and-

wire cage to safely house both the Checkerspot larvae and the plants that sustain them. Park rangers raise the Checkerspots for



Adult Checkerspots laying eggs.
Photo: Ranger Bart Viguers

educational purposes and for future release into the park and surrounding communities. In addition to the hatching cage, rangers and volunteers planted turtlehead, enclosed to protect against deer, in several areas throughout the park, which will support the butterfly population once released.

Long-term plans include organizing a “Turtlehead Trail Group” of interested neighbors, garden clubs and nature lovers who

will volunteer to plant turtlehead in yards and gardens radiating outward from the park to expand the surrounding habitat and further ensure the life cycle of the Checkerspots. For further information, please contact community@relpnc.org.

Protecting Checkerspots in your Backyard

You can contribute to this effort by planting some of the species that sustain Checkerspot butterflies (see list). Caterpillars cannot survive, however, if they feed on pesticide-treated plants, so it is essential to confirm that the cultivars you purchase have been grown without pesticides. Many nurseries, even those specializing in native species, treat their plants with pesticides, so always call and check before you order. The Maryland Native Plant Society website features for a list of nurseries that specialize in native plants (mdflora.org/publications/nurseries.html) and also look for butterfly-friendly, untreated plants at our autumn plant sale at Robert E. Lee Park. ❖





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OPEN HOUSE: OCT 27 • TOURS WITH PRINCIPALS: OCT 18, NOV 8, DEC 12

Native Plants That Sustain Checkerspot Butterflies

- Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
- Dogbane (*Apocynum spp.*)
- Oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)
- Penstemons, viburnums (*Viburnum recognitum Fernald and Viburnum acerifolium*)
- White ash (*Fraxinus americana*)
- Lousewort (*Pedicularis spp.*)
- Honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp.*)
- Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
- Daisy fleabane (*Erigeron annuus Pers.*)
- Hoary mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum incanum Michx.*)
- Short-toothed mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum (Michx.) Pers.*)
- Virginia mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*)
- Wild blackberry (*Rubus spp.*)