

## Gibbons Pines Park Stormwater Swale

In 2018, Madison's Assistant Borough Engineer asked the Garden Club of Madison (GCM) for help with a trouble spot in a pocket park. The park had a low spot that collected water after storms and led to erosion that was unsightly for the neighborhood. GCM's Conservation Committee took on the challenge of beautifying the Gibbons Pines Park stormwater management swale.



In a joint project funded by the Borough of Madison, the Friends of Madison Shade Trees and the Garden Club of Madison, member Beth Riley selected and procured native plants that would thrive in a rain garden and in an adjacent drier bed. With help from Borough employees, three river birches (*Betula heritage*) and dozens of golden ragwort (*Packera aurea*) and hay-scented ferns

(*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*) were planted within the swale. Blue star (*Amsonia hubrichtii*) and swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) were planted in a crescent-shaped bed along the back side of the swale to provide additional color and attract pollinators. The garden was officially certified as a Monarch Waystation in 2019 and a sign was posted.



As always, a garden is never finished! The Conservation Committee has added a variety of native species over the past five years to

suppress weeds, provide more food for wildlife, and add color. A fourth river birch was added in 2019. In 2020, members added plants propagated from seed or divided from their gardens: Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*), Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*), Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), Penstemon (*Penstemon digitalis*), Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), and Great Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*). In the fall of 2023, six wild blue phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) were purchased to plant in and among the golden ragwort. In 2024, one dozen swamp milkweeds (*Asclepias incarnata*) and six butterfly milkweeds will be added to the swale to replace the milkweeds that were crowded out by the expansive amsonias in the pollinator bed.



During the pandemic, committee members found solace maintaining the garden beds together at Gibbons. The committee began holding meetings there regularly and realized that a public bench would be useful. Members initiated a club-wide plastic bag recycling project to earn a free Trex bench for the park in 2021.

This area of the park has been transformed from mud-puddle to ecologically-rich native plant habitat and meeting space. These lush native garden beds showcase for the public how native plants can beautify, provide habitat for pollinators, and manage stormwater.



## **Monarch Butterfly Waystation Project**

The Conservation committee began to educate members about the importance of planting Monarch Waystations in their home gardens in 2018.

### **Why?**

Monarch butterflies are an endangered species. Climate change is a big threat, but habitat loss has also contributed to their population declines. The Monarch Waystation project aims to offset the loss of monarch butterfly habitats.

### **Is it easy to create a waystation?**

Yes! According to Monarch Watch, you can create a waystation by planting milkweed plants where they lay their larvae, a variety of nectar plants that sustain them throughout the season as adults, and shrubs for shelter. Practicing insect-friendly gardening practices such as avoiding pesticides and removing invasive plant species

### **What has the Garden Club of Madison done so far?**

Now, 23 club members have certified Monarch Watch waystations. We have established a waystation in two public parks in Madison, Rose Garden Park and Gibbons Pines Park. The Conservation committee has held three native plant seed propagation workshops to educate new members about the importance of native plants and monarch waystations. To celebrate our centennial, the club donated 10 plant Monarch Waystation kits to 100 lucky community members in May of 2022.

For more information contact Elaine Arciszewski or Lydia Chambers.

## **Oliver Street School Partnership**

More than 20 years ago, the Garden Club of Madison established a partnership with Oliver Street School in Newark through The Greater Newark Conservancy. Oliver Street School is located in the Iron Bound section which is both an industrial and residential community. It is surrounded by Newark Airport, rail lines, and active truck routes. New Jersey's largest garbage incinerator and numerous contaminated land sites are located in this nature-deprived area. All these factors contribute to a very high asthma rate among the children from the polluted atmosphere.

GCM's small role with Oliver Street School is an annual onsite planting with the children. Plant material consists of vegetables, herbs, and drought resistant annuals. In addition, GCM sponsors field trips to Reeves Reed Arboretum in Summit where the children participate in a full day "Hands to Nature" program. Members assist the staff in the educational activities, provide lunch and transportation.

GCM's adventures with the children whether it be planting with them or assisting at Reeves Reed Arboretum has developed camaraderie with participating members. What a thrill to share in the happiness of discovering the beauties of nature with the children, our most precious treasure!