

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

SEPTEMBER 2024

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Medicinal Properties of Phase 3 Monarch Garden by Donna McKenna

After much planning the REAL Butterfly Committee members completed Phase Three of our butterfly / pollinating gardens on the REAL Deal site in late May. The plants were chosen based on their herbal and medicinal properties as well as their ability to provide food for our visiting butterflies, bees and beneficial insects. We are happy to report that most of the plants did very well in establishing themselves in the new raised beds. The following is a summary of the plants we chose and their reported medicinal properties.

American Arnica (*Arnica chamissoni*). Arnica is considered to be one of the most powerful herbs for the treatment of bruises and sprains when applied topically as a cream, salve or gel. Strong analgesic and antiseptic properties has also been found to be effective in treating osteoarthritic pain when applied to the skin.

White Sage (*Salvia apiana*). One of the most popular indigenous people's sacred herbs used for ceremonial purposes. Smudging is done by drying, bundling and burning the herb to purify the surroundings of negative energy. Medicinally, white sage is an antibacterial and antioxidant, which makes it helpful for colds and flus. Its high eucalyptol content helps to clear congestion. Typically administered as a tincture, tea, or inhalation steam bath for its therapeutic effects.

Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*). Wormwood is highly reputable as a digestive aid, with bitter leaves infused and distilled into absinthe, and vermouth; liquors of which are appetite stimulants and digestive aids. Used internally for fever, jaundice, parasites and externally to treat sprains, bruises and lumbago. Also appreciated as a pesticide against nematode soil pests.

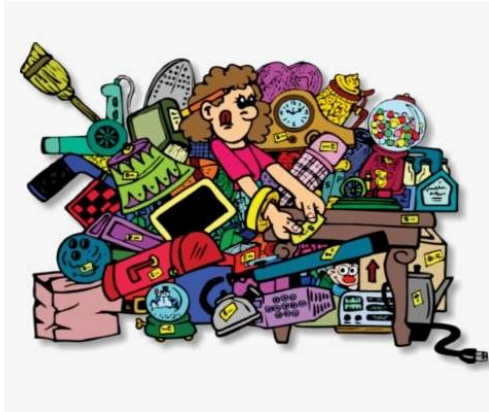
Purple coneflower (*Echinacea*). Echinacea is primarily recognized for its immune stimulating properties. First used by indigenous people for snakebites, wounds and bruises. Can be useful against upper respiratory tract infections.



REAL Deal Mysteries

Here are just a few observations from time spent at the REAL Deal sorting, pricing and displaying incoming donations. The smalls volunteers love to open up those bags and boxes and see what is being donated, and are interested to see what attracts shoppers. But some things make you wonder!

- Most glasses are only .50. But if we put a set out, say 7 glasses, people will not necessarily buy all of them. For that price shouldn't they buy a spare?
- Ice cube trays seem to come and go quickly. Why are they so popular? Do they get broken?
- The care people take with breakables varies a lot. Sometimes we get inexpensive, dirty or broken things wrapped lovingly in lots of paper, and sometimes we get garbage bags full of breakables.
- There are appliances that seem like a good idea but people quickly tire of them: Magic bullets, George Foreman grills, foot baths in particular.
- We get lots of coffee makers, but not so many electric kettles. Do people prefer coffee to tea?
- People are always asking for butter dishes. Is the word out that butter isn't as unhealthy as once thought, so people are using it again?
- People really don't browse too low or too high, moving stuff to a different level often helps
- China, silverware, crystal, and fancy glass pieces not big sellers, but are a great deals for the people who need to complete their sets!
- Teaspoons and forks are always in demand, but we have so many dinner knives we have had to put some in scrap metal.
- We often find "craft projects gone wrong". No matter, hopefully it will give someone else a good idea.



Medicinal Plants (continued)

Chamomile- (*chamaemelum*). Chamomile is known for its ability to ease insomnia, depression, headaches, and anxiety. It is also useful as a digestive relaxant to treat gastrointestinal disturbances.

Lavender - (*lavandula angustifolia*). The aromatic oils have a relaxing effect and are typically used medicinally to combat stress. In addition, it is recognized as an anti-depressive, anti-inflammatory and carminative.

Lemon balm (*melissa officinalis*). Medicinally used for calming the mind, soothing an upset stomach and relieving pain. Perfect to use before bed, as it is mild sedative; delicious on its own or when mixed with mint and lavender.

Marshmallow (*althaea officinalis*). Plant mucilage is especially therapeutic for bowel disorders, helping to heal the gut lining. It can also help calm irritated coughs. The leaf has indications in the treatment of urinary tract infections.

Valerian (*valeriana officinalis*). Valerian roots are used as a sedative and can help with anxiety, nervousness and insomnia; can also be used to relax tense muscles and soothe digestive discomfort.

Calendula (*calendula officinalis*). Calendula's medicinal value is mainly as a topical ointment, promoting fast healing through its antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, astringent and vulnerary actions of its flower. It was used in the Civil War and WWI as a treatment for gangrene. Its flowers can be brewed into a tea.

Rosemary (*salvia rosmarinus*). Rosemary is said to be beneficial for memory. It has also been researched for its role in reducing obesity, hyperglycemia, and cardiovascular disease. The oils have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, as well as anti-microbial properties.

Monarda (*monarda fistulosa*). Monarda has anti-inflammatory, anti bacterial properties and is traditionally used for infection and digestive disturbances.

Raising Monarchs a Great Experience

Two REAL members enjoyed the experience of raising monarch butterflies indoors this summer before releasing them. Patricia Lynch, a retired Kemptville elementary school teacher, described raising butterflies at REAL's June AGM. Cathryn Davidson and David and Joni Thornley said they would like to give it a try, and were provided with tiny monarch caterpillars to watch and protect by Patricia.

Both were loaned an enclosure created from an upside down tomato cage with the prongs bent over, and covered in netting. The cater-

Said Cathryn, "The process is amazing, watching them grow and eat milkweed, climb to a place away from the milkweed and form a chrysalis, then coming out of the chrysalis as a monarch butterfly. The process took four weeks, from when I started with the tiny caterpillar to when I released the first monarch butterfly. I found it a really wonderful experience."

The Thornleys were equally excited with the process. "It was fun to get up in the morning to study



pillars were on a sprig of milkweed standing in a vase. Cathryn's caterpillar was so small she needed a magnifying glass to see it.

The Thornleys started off with two tiny caterpillars on a piece of milkweed leaf. The caterpillars slowly moved around and ate and grew day by day. There were a few dormant periods when they were concerned they might not be alive, but were relieved when they noticed that the leaves had been eaten. Fresh milkweed needs to be provided every few days when the older milkweed becomes dry or droopy. The Thornleys found a lot of their milkweed along the Catarauqui Trail.

Cathryn sourced the milkweed from her own garden. After cutting some she noticed something very small crawling on it. After sending a photo to Patricia she realized she now had a second caterpillar!

the caterpillars that our granddaughter named Frederick and Fredrica. We learned many facts about them from a library book, so felt quite educated on the life cycle of the monarch butterfly. They changed into a green chrysalis after two weeks and hung from the top of the cage. About a week later the color changed into a purplish black and you could see an outline of the wings. We missed the cycle of them releasing from their chrysalis, but were very happy to see them fly about in the cage.

"After one day of them becoming butterflies, we took them outside. A group of runners were passing by and were invited to watch on the driveway. We then upended the cage and freed them. One flew high into a tree and the other outward into the sky. There was a bit of cheering and clapping."

To learn more about raising butterflies and teaching students about conservation, start with the [Monarch Teacher Network of Canada](#).



FALL ONLINE AUCTION 2024

OPENS - WED. NOV . 13, 8 AM

CLOSES - SAT. NOV. 23, 9 PM

**Place your bids from your
phone or computer at
www.32auctions.com/REAL2024**

**Over 100 items to bid on
Collectibles - Christmas - Local Services
Entertainment - Home and Garden
And much more!**

**Winners should pick up and pay
for auction items starting Nov. 20
at the REAL Deal Store
85 William St. W, Smiths Falls,
Wed - Sat 10 am - 5 pm**

**Most entries are gently used items
donated to the store.
Additional donations gratefully accepted!
Contact Donna at andisondj@gmail.com**

**Proceeds to the Rideau
Environmental Action League
www.REALaction.ca**

REAL Deal News

Summer. Staff and volunteers are glad the summer heat is over with. It made for challenging conditions for the yard staff. Frequent breaks, water and popsicles were all we could do. We instituted a new policy that the dome will be closed if the temperature reaches 39 C or 100 F inside the structure. There were also some days that the yard closed early to donations. It wasn't too bad inside the store without air conditioning, as the concrete block walls helped to keep the heat out.

Donations. It was also an unusually slow year at the REAL Deal for donations, we had less volume than other years. This also translated to a reduction in sales, but the effect was minimal because we have such a large inventory. There are many theories for the drop in donations, but it seems that other thrift stores have experienced the same trend. The excessive heat and more ways for people to sell the items on their own are possible reasons. People are feeling the pinch economically and are shopping more carefully in general. We will try to address that by "connecting the dots" a little better so people see the value of second hand shopping, and make them choose to contribute to the work of an organization that supports environmental projects.

Now that fall has arrived the store has been having some exceptionally good sales days, particularly on Wednesdays and Saturdays, when we see more new people and out of town shoppers.

This was the first summer we were unable to hire a student for the summer, as our application for an HRSDC grant was unsuccessful. With the slower donations the volunteers who sort the incoming goods were able to keep up.

Staff. A number of new people have joined the REAL Deal team in past months. Max, who is helping out in the tool library, and Edwige, who is sorting incoming goods one afternoon a week, are both volunteers. On placement from OnTrac are Kim (inside the store) and Josh, who has been a big help in the yard when some of the regulars needed time off. We are glad to have them all!

Promotions. In any given week there was something being promoted, usually at 25 % off. In the dome and yard: windows, small appliances, vanities, sporting goods, tiles and mirrors were some of the features, and inside: tapes, cassette, books, baking implements, rocking chairs, end tables were on special. We are also trying to move some of the art along, so there was \$10 and free art outside most of the summer, weather permitting. At the end of the summer we were offering 25% off anything in the yard as we need to make room for snow-removal. The fall items, especially wreaths, were getting snapped up as soon as they are put out. Once again we have oodles of Christmas merchandise and the store has become an important Christmas shopping destination; we will start putting those items out in October.

**Juliiia****Josh****Edwige****Max**

REAL Board Changes

Directors at REAL's August Board Meeting agreed to the following positions:

President – Karen Schecter
 Vice-President – Donna McKenna
 Treasurer – Dave Thornley
 Secretary – Barb Hicks
 Member at Large – Peter Au

Karen now has the distinction of having served in every board position! Donna will back her up as Vice-President. Donna is very involved in the REAL Deal, the online auction, and all of our greening projects as well. Dave became Treasurer, and Barb became Secretary in July 2020. Rounding out the board is Peter Au, one of REAL's founding members. Aira Sarmiento, the latest addition to the board, resigned due to work and school commitments.

We are always looking for enthusiastic people to join our working board. Our by-laws allow for up to 12 board members, and allow us to appoint members along the way. That is, you do not have to wait until our June AGM if you are interested in participating. If protecting the local environment is important to you and you want to do something about it, please contact us to discuss the possibilities!

A resume or short bio would be helpful so we can learn more about you. We usually start with a conversation between the prospective board member and two current board members, and sitting in on one of our monthly board meetings. Karen Schecter can be reached at schecter karen@gmail.com or (613) 283-4604.



Fall and Winter Composting

Fall. This is the best time to do 'the big harvest' of any finished compost. It's also a good time of year to apply compost to your gardens and lawn. This also frees up lots of space in your composter for kitchen organics you'll generate over the winter months. Once you've separated out the finished product, replace any unfinished material in the composter, placing a layer of woody, high carbon material on the bottom.

Be sure to put aside a few extra bags of leaves to stack around your composter for insulation and to use as a source of carbon to blend with fresh food wastes you add to your pile throughout the winter months.



Winter. The whole composting process really slows down over the winter months, often completely freezing up, but that doesn't mean you have to stop adding fresh materials to your composting unit.

If you stockpiled a few bags of leaves the previous fall you can add some of these with each input of food scraps. If you're at all concerned that you're adding too many high nitrogen products and you've got the space, consider putting excess fruit and vegetable scraps in a plastic tub in the freezer and add them to your composter in the spring.

More Details. These suggestions are from a [composting fact sheet](#) available on our website's Composting How To page.

In REAL Life

Wetlands Tours. The voyageur canoe tours of the swale planned for Sat. Sept. 7 were postponed to Sat. Sept. 28 due to the heavy rain warning. Jake Wilson will be in touch with anyone who signed up. If you did not sign up but would like to go on the 28th, please contact him at (613) 327-9018 or email rideauexperience@rideaoundtable.ca. The tours are organized by the Rideau Roundtable with support from REAL.



Rain Barrels. For the first time we still have rain barrels available in September. We usually order in a quantity to have after the spring rain barrel sale, but have not sold them all. Perhaps the rainy weather lead many people to think they didn't need one! We have regular black rain barrels for \$65 and some "ugly ducking" black rain barrels, which are functional but a little more beat up, for \$55. They are alongside the dome and come with all the necessary attachments. Note that if we sell rain barrels next year, it will be a little later in the season than usual, so if you are thinking you want one for next year, it would be best to buy it now.



Electronic Waste. Thanks everyone for using our ewaste depot at the REAL Deal. This EPR program allows valuable materials to be recovered, keeps hazardous materials out of our landfills and waterways, and earns REAL cash! Note that we can now accept other unwanted or non-functioning small appliances. Sorry, the depot is for residential use only, if you are a large organization wanting to get rid of lots of ewaste at once, please look elsewhere. Please do not bring anything oversized or over 50 pounds, as we do not have the equipment to move them safely. Appliances should be brought to the REAL Deal during store hours, it doesn't matter if the bin is closed. Just leave your drop-offs against the wall and staff will load the bin. Please do not scavenge in the materials there or in the bin. It is dangerous and contrary to our agreement with the EPRA.



Lending Programs. Please speak to us if you are interested in borrowing a killawatt meter, an air quality meter, a radon meter or one of our FoodCycler countertop composting units. We keep them all at the REAL Deal, with the exception of the radon meters, which can be borrowed by contacting Katie Hoffman at hoffman.katie9@gmail.com or (613) 983-3360.



Dish Lending. The REAL Deal maintains a supply of mugs, glassware, cutlery and plates upstairs to rent to people/groups holding large gatherings and wanting to avoid disposables. While we haven't done this a lot, we have provided these items for four events this summer. We have decided to free up our glassware and regular mugs, as it is harder to keep safe and there is usually lots on the shelves if people want it. But if you would like to rent white mugs, white plates or metal cutlery please get in touch. Note they do not all match! As you will have to clean it before you use it as well as bring it back clean, we keep our rates very reasonable. We have countertop beverage dispensers, coffee urns and extra punch cups also.

Box 1061
Smiths Falls ON
K7A 5A5
info@REALaction.ca

www.REALaction.ca

**REAL Deal Store &
Environment Centre**

85 William St. W.
Smiths Falls ON
613-283-7999

Open Wednesday
through Saturdays
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Ask about our
Tool Library**

For Home Energy Audits,
contact Alan Leonard at:
alanleonard9@gmail.com

Find us on
Facebook and
Instagram

Send contributions to the
December issue by November
15 to dhicks11@cogeco.ca
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

**MINI FOREST
PLANTING DAY**

**Saturday, October 5
Hyland Park, Empress Ave,
Smiths Falls**

**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED**



**A mini forest is a community of native
trees and shrubs planted tightly together
that matures faster than other forests.**

Be a part of it! We are planting the
site prepared April 13. Volunteers will
plant three small seedlings or plants in
each one metre square. Due to the
small space, people will be scheduled
in half hours slots throughout the day
beginning at 9:30. Children welcome
if accompanied by an adult.

**FREE BBQ
11:00 am. - 1:00 pm**

**Thanks to the Town
of Smiths Falls**

**VOLUNTEERS MUST
PRE REGISTER**

Contact Dave at
thornley.j.d@gmail.com or
phone (613) 205-0320.



www.REALaction.ca

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- Student membership \$5
- Corporate membership \$50

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