

It all started with a talk about flowers and plants and it turned into a spark that ignited interest for the city of DeLand. John Hatfield, a member of the Rotary Club of DeLand, heard a lecture at his church from DeLand's former City Manager Mike Abels about the decline of the Monarch butterfly population. John and Mike talked later about John's growing concern and interest about the Monarch butterfly and what he could do to help. John got connected to Jim West, the butterfly guy, a former teacher and butterfly enthusiast and Karen Hall from the Garden Club of DeLand. John found many more supporters and the Monarch City USA website. He attended a City Commission Meeting and brought the idea to Mayor Robert Apgar and Assistant City Manager Mike Grebosz. Before he knew it, the City registered DeLand as the first Monarch City USA in the state of Florida on February 5, 2018. One of the qualifications to be a Monarch City is to hold a festival for butterflies, so when DeLand hosted its annual Wildflower Festival in March, they decided it would be a perfect opportunity to include their growing group of concerned butterfly lovers to educate the public. Mariellen Calabro, City Forester with the City of DeLand, passed out wildflower seeds at the event promoting awareness of the now named DeLand Butterfly Society.

They along with many other butterfly supporters decided to revamp the Garden Club's Sensory Garden located at Bill Dreggors Park, 230 North Stone Street, DeLand, Florida. The Garden Club designed the garden in 1998 as a benefit for the visually impaired with Braille signs and pathways accessible for the physically challenged where plants were selected for their fragrance, color, and texture. Jim West designed the plans for a butterfly-friendly garden. In March 2018 over 1,000 plants were planted and 200 were relocated to their new home in the butterfly garden. A few of the larval plants added were milkweed, passion vine, Cassia, Dutchman's pipe, parsley, dill, fennel, and Penta. The nectar plants included were lantana, Buddleia, porterweed, Salvia, plumbago, firebush, Alstroemeria lily, daylily, Vinca, African iris, firecracker, bottlebrush, Mexican sunflower, impatiens, sky vine, bush daisy, and Mexican flame vine.

The Garden Club of DeLand is also certifying local resident's gardens to become a Certified Butterfly Sanctuary. The requirements are to be a DeLand resident, have a minimum of 5 milkweed plants, 3 different larval plants, and a minimum of 20 plants total. A group from the Garden Club will come out to certify your garden and they give you the option to purchase an aluminum Certified Butterfly Sanctuary sign for \$20 for your garden.

The Sensory Garden was re-dedicated on Saturday, May 5, 2018, with several Garden Club members, the Mayor, City of DeLand employees, and many other interested citizens.

Many City of DeLand employees have been a part of the Sensory Garden whether in planting or maintaining the garden or promoting education. A Garden Club member's husband created a Facebook page called DeLand Monarch Butterfly City USA for interested people to follow progress and future possibilities for creating more butterfly-friendly gardens. A local business owner, Rosa Meddaugh, created a Monarch butterfly T-shirt and sells them in her shop in downtown DeLand.

The idea and efforts of one interested person sparked a change for the whole community. It is awe-inspiring to see so many citizens come together and work towards a common goal. You can feel the excitement in the air surrounding DeLand and see the beauty of the many butterflies they have brought to their community.

Jennifer Condo is a member of the Garden Club of DeLand and a new Master Gardener in Volusia County, Florida. She has a native pollinator garden and strongly supports organic gardening.