



Windy City

Biosolids/Compost

Fall/Winter 2021-2022

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9th Annual Sustainability Summit 2021



Cog Hill Sustainability Specialist Angelica Carmen (left) and Chicago Eco House President Quilen Blackwell (above) won awards for Biosolids Beneficial Reuse.

The MWRD's 9th Annual Sustainability Summit held on October 12, 2021 was a virtual trove of information about the sustainability of biosolids use, stormwater management, and community efforts to create a more sustainable region. Some of the highlights were from experts: Dr. Sally Brown extolling the many benefits of biosolids use for sustainable practices, Benjamin Krumstock sharing the importance of composting food scraps and providing information on the Illinois Foodscrap Coalition, Ma'raj Sheik sharing insights from the Chicago Food Policy Action Council, and Matt Freer engaging the audience with demonstrations of natural areas in the Chicago Park District. We also heard from several of MWRD's scientists on beneficial use of biosolids and engineers on stormwater management.

We are happy to announce that two of our featured Windy City Biosolids Newsletter stories this year were inspired by the 2021 recipients of the Biosolids Beneficial Reuse awards. Angelica Carmen was featured in the Summer 2021 newsletter for her work at Cog Hill Golf and Country Club, and Quilen Blackwell is featured in this issue for work at the Chicago Eco House. Both awards were well deserved, as the recipients demonstrated the great benefits of biosolids in diverse uses.

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The 2021 Biosolids Beneficial Reuse Award went to...

- Angelica Carmen, sustainability specialist from Cog Hill Golf and Country Club in Lemont, for leading Cog Hill's sustainability program on the use of EQ compost in raised beds and planting bed soil.
- Quilen Blackwell, president and founder of Chicago Eco House, for his use and promotion of biosolids to grow flowers in vacant lots and other open spaces while also inspiring youth to learn new job skills using composted biosolids.

Southside Blooms Blossom in EQ Compost

Sunflowers were blooming in a Washington Park garden this fall thanks to the hard work of Chicago Eco House, whose mission is to alleviate poverty through sustainability. Chicago Eco House used 278 dry tons of EQ Compost to help create Southside Blooms, a project designed to convert vacant lots into safe, productive, regenerative urban farms and provide jobs for at-risk youth.

The farm produces flowers that are cut and sold to provide revenue and jobs in a community that benefits from the transformed lot.

President Kari K. Steele, MWRD Commissioner Kimberly Du Buclet and Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos joined Southside Blooms President Quilen Blackwell and project partners from Emerald South Economic Development Collaborative, South East Chicago Commission, the Office of Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton's Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority and Illinois Department of Agriculture on August 26 to cut the ribbon and introduce Southside Blooms. The soil was prepared in May and planting took place in June. By the ribbon cutting, the site was bursting with blooms.

"Southside Blooms is grateful for our partnership with MWRD! If not for their free high-quality compost, this project wouldn't have been financially feasible for us," said Quilen Blackwell, President of Southside Blooms.

To learn more or purchase flowers or other products, visit southsideblooms.com.



Sunflowers are sprouting up on the 5200 block of South Prairie Avenue to beautify the community and provide jobs and a steady stream of revenue.



MWRD President Kari K. Steele and Southside Blooms President Quilen Blackwell formally cut the ribbon on a new flower farm in the Washington Park neighborhood. Holding the ribbon from left is MWRD Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulo and MWRD Commissioner Kimberly Du Buclet.

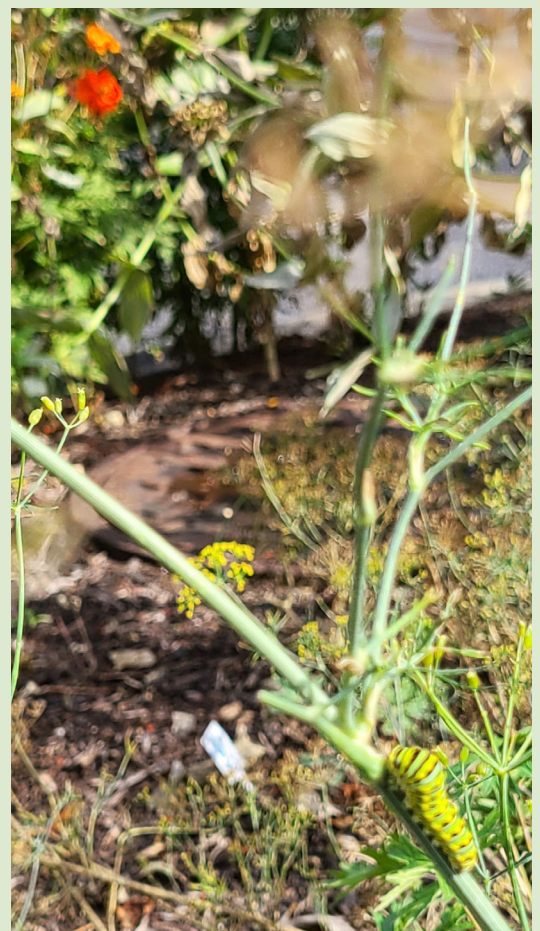
Start Your Own Butterfly Project

We want to give you some tips on attracting butterflies to your own garden. We are following the strategy used for the Berteau Butterfly Project, that is featured on the next page, which includes at least one monarch host plant and one swallowtail host plant.

1. Choose at least two species of pollinator friendly plants. One of these should be a butterfly host plant, which provides food for caterpillars, and one should be a nectar plant, which provides food for the adults. See the chart on page 4 to find host plants for several butterfly species.
2. Once you have selected species, prepare a garden bed or container for your seeds or plants mixing EQ Compost in to make a soil mix. See our [summer issue](#) for more details.
3. If you are planting by seed, you can plant your seeds outdoors in late fall for dormant seeding and watch the plants germinate in spring. If you are planting live plants, put them into your bed or container in mid-late spring or early-mid fall.
4. Watch your garden and butterfly population grow!

Interested in receiving free milkweed seeds? Take the "Save the Monarchs" pledge at <https://mwrld.org/save-monarchs>

Continued on page 4.



Ruta Lietuvninkas, Creator of Berteau Butterfly Garden Project

MWRD: Why did you start the Chicago Berteau Butterfly Project?

Ruta: I saw all this grass along the sidewalk and very few butterflies so I thought we can do better. I thought if everyone planted just a couple of pollinator friendly plants, we would see more butterflies.

MWRD: Do you think the EQ Compost helped establish the gardens?



A honeybee collects pollen from the raised beds outside of Ruta's front door.

wonderful wherever it has been used. I keep trying to spread the word (and the compost)!

MWRD: How did you get neighbors interested in joining your project?

Ruta: I reached out to them. Many people were excited about the idea but hesitant to take on a big project. They asked what they could do to participate if they had never gardened before. I told them plant two things: a host plant for monarchs and a host plant for swallowtails. The simplicity made it easier for everyone who wanted to participate to join. They don't even have to have the plants in front of their house. Some people are putting them in the back. We just want everyone on the block to join!



Before, April 2021, a corner with compacted soil and patchy grass.



Ever since she was given her first packet of seeds as a child by her Lithuanian mother to plant in their Marquette Park yard, Ruta has incorporated gardening as an essential balance to her professional IT career. "A garden is a place of calm and joy."

Ruta Lietuvninkas by Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

MWRD: I really like the signs that participants have placed in the garden giving the names and descriptions of the plants present. Was this a requirement for participating?

Ruta: No, but it makes it more interesting. I think having a name for the project and sharing information makes people stop and explore the gardens more. I have walked past other butterfly gardens in the neighborhood on other streets but people just walk past without really looking. I think this draws people in. If you notice, the corner garden woodchips serve as an entrance and exit to encourage people to actually enter the garden and explore.

MWRD: Do you see a difference in the number of pollinators after starting the project?

Ruta: Yes! I cannot believe how many more species of insects and butterflies are just in this little patch of the neighborhood. All of the neighbors have made the same observation and are so enthusiastic about it. I can see and hear life along the sidewalk now.

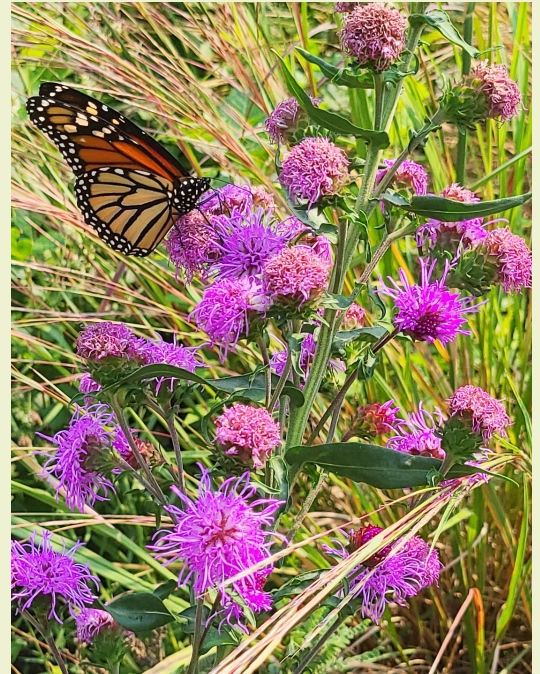


After, September 2021, a welcoming garden with areas to walk and explore.

Start Your Own Butterfly Project, *cont.*

Butterfly	Host Plant Species
Monarch	Milkweeds
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	Black Cherry, Basswood, Birch, Cottonwood, Willow, Tulip Tree
Black Swallowtail	Dill, Parsley, Fennel, Golden Alexanders
Painted Lady	Sunflowers, Mallow, (also Thistles and Nettle)
Regal Fritillary	Prairie Violet, Bird's Foot Violet

Examples of nectar plants for adults: Goldenrods, Asters, Coreopsis, Queen-of-the-Prairie, Cone Flowers, Golden Alexanders, Blazing Stars, Lobelia, and Zinnias



EQ Compost and Biosolids

Thank you to everyone who participated in our biosolids program in 2021. From home gardens to golf course maintenance to native prairie restorations, your projects inspire us to produce high quality EQ biosolids year after year.

Our EQ Compost and Biosolids season is over for 2021. Please see our [previous newsletters](#) for more examples of how EQ Compost and Biosolids can be incorporated into landscape projects and turfgrass maintenance.

Our popular programs, including the bring-your-own bucket piles, bulk pick up of EQ Compost and Biosolids, and delivery of bulk orders will continue in mid-late spring 2022. Availability will depend on our winter and spring weather. If you have a large order that you would like to add to our Spring 2022 waitlist, would like a site visit, or have general questions about our products, please contact Theresa Johnston at johnstont@mwr.org. See you in 2022!



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