



Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club
Club des naturalistes d'Ottawa

2025

MARY STUART EDUCATION AWARD: BERIT ERICKSON

The Mary Stuart Education Award is for members, non-members or organizations, in recognition for outstanding achievements in the field of natural history education in the Ottawa Region.

Berit Erickson is recognized for her work to educate and motivate people to plant pollinator gardens.

Berit's story begins in 2017 with a newly-empty front yard after her tree was blown down in a storm. After reading newer gardening books about habitat loss and its effect on birds, bees and other wildlife, she saw an opportunity to compensate for habitat loss by planting native plants in her front yard. This started her on a journey to help other urban dwellers to provide pollinators and other wildlife with chemical-free gardens using native plants. She extended the garden to her full back yard and added a stream, which has become a sanctuary for many species of birds. Her demonstration garden quickly became a neighbourhood attraction, and she started talking to and educating passers-by about pollinator gardens. She also created educational brochures and placed them in the garden for times when she was not there - hundreds have been taken so far!

Berit expanded her educational work by developing a website that covers topics such as garden design, assessing light and soil conditions, planting for the different seasons, sourcing native seeds and seedlings, and improving habitat for bees, butterflies and other pollinators. She has given many talks at pollinator gatherings, including at FWG and OFNC, and has even brought the message to the younger generation by helping to create a

butterfly garden at her son's school. Berit has been a regular volunteer at the Pinhey Sand Dunes, guiding visiting groups in the planting and pulling work that maintains the dune habitat. Her extensive knowledge and skill as an educator have been recognized by the Canadian Wildlife Federation which made a video of Berit describing how to create a pollinator garden. Her educational efforts have also been recognized by local newspapers (Kitchissippi Times), news outlets (CBC), and gardening newsletters (The Edible Gardener). Berit is always teaching!

For her enthusiastic and persistent work educating people about pollinator gardens, the OFNC is very proud to present the Mary Stuart Education Award to Berit Erickson.

Prepared by Chris Archibald

