

A Garden Dedicated to Nature & Butterflies

By Linda Cobb

Master Gardener Lyn Pesterfield spent her entire adult life doing traditional gardening in each of the homes that she has made for herself and her son, but as of today, she has her entire front yard turned into a butterfly garden. The journey of how she got there is interesting.

Lyn currently lives in Boiling Springs, S.C., with her son, John, and is a regulatory compliance manager for Prym Consumer. She came from a good gardening background with her dad, Charles, doing lots of vegetable gardening, her paternal grandmother, Fannie, growing vegetables, and her maternal grandfather growing a huge flower garden where he picked bouquets for his wife. When Lyn had her first duplex, dad came over and helped her plant her first vegetable garden on the side of the yard and proceeded to watch his daughter get bitten by the gardening bug, big time!

From there she moved to a townhouse, and then a larger home where she manicured the lawn, planted a vegetable garden, added perennial beds, and planted Japanese maples to enhance the property. In 1995, she took the master gardener course. Pesterfield says, "That course changed my life. There were so many good

Lynn Pesterfield and her son, John, are proud of the final transformation of their front garden.



teachers and I finally learned how to feed my plants and amend my soil.” She laughs and says that from there, it became a sickness. She collected plants and went from planting “a drift of one plant to a drift of five to seven plants.” Over the next years she lived in a country house where she had to put in 12 raised beds because the soil was like concrete. Each time, when she knew she was moving, she would start dividing her plants and potting the ones up that she cherished. Through each move the pot count went from 10 pots to 75 pots of plants that she has transported from garden to garden each time.

She moved to a house in Sterling Estates in Boiling Springs. Immediately

➔ **The house was devoid of any gardens when she purchased it.**

▼ **Lynn installed a butterfly garden right away removing one-third of the front lawn.**





▲ Lyn has finished up installing the rest of the butterfly garden in her front lawn. She plans to lay a stone walkway through the middle of it.

◀ The upright elephant ears with Liriope and Vinca makes a very dramatic statement along the front.

▲ Guara, rudbeckia, and more attract many pollinators to Lyn's garden.

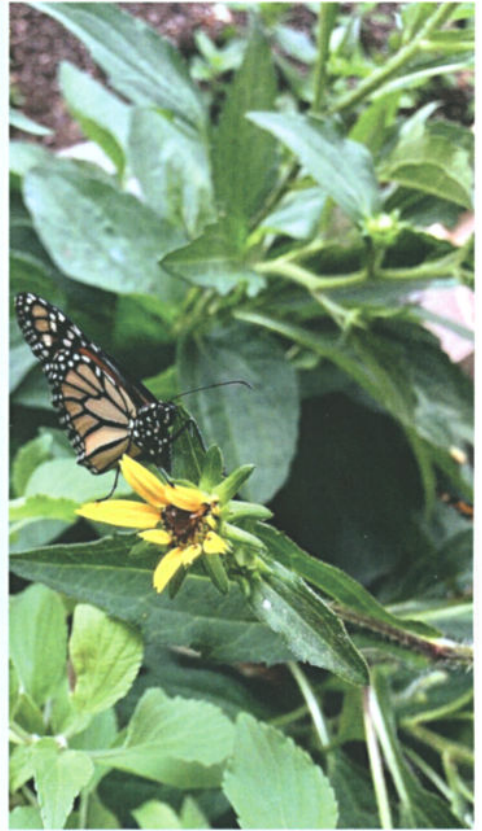


she started improving the plantings. The house had a backyard with a 45-degree slope. The first day she was out planting shrubs instead of unpacking, because that is what a dedicated gardener does, right?

Lyn, looking at the impossible slope in the backyard, consulted with Aaron McCarty of Ancient Earth Landscaping. Aaron introduced her to some new permaculture techniques to make that slope usable. They turned it into a productive food forest for her family. They terraced the back into four levels, installing berms and swales (a mulch filled trench that captures water going downhill effectively). This made the land usable by stopping the water from going downhill.

They planted clover as a cover crop to add nitrogen back into the soil and provide flowers for the pollinators to use. She now grows tomatoes, eggplant, broccoli, blackberries, and raspberries. She has planted three apple trees, one pomegranate tree, 10 blueberry bushes and two Asian pear trees.

When she got ready to plant the front yard she called landscape con-



Lyn observed the three stages of the chrysalis. The small dots are air holes for the caterpillar when the chrysalis is green. The chrysalis turns black before the butterfly emerges. Then the monarch butterfly comes out and hangs for some time to air out their wings until they can fly.

sultant Linda McHam and they chose plants that were butterfly and climate friendly. They planted a large bed in the front corner of the lot. Since the lot was a small one they focused on size, keeping the plants to scale. They planted some dwarf conifers such as *Thuja occidentalis*, 'Blue Star' juniper (*Juniperus squamata* 'Blue Star'), and mugo pine (*Pinus mugo*). Lyn added a dwarf Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum* 'Green Waterfall') and a dwarf sweet cherry tree. Lyn filled the bed with *Coreopsis*, *Lantana*, goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.), *Rudbeckia*, *Eupatorium*, *Salvia*, daylilies (*Hemerocallis*), Shasta daisy (*Leucanthemum x superbum* 'Becky'), and Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*). Lyn says that the two plants she loves the most are *Agastache* and *Echinacea* 'Pow Wow'. The corner bed turned out larger than expected. But the bed has thrived over that last couple of years.

Lyn ripped out the *Loropetalum* and azaleas (*Rhododendron* spp.) in the bed under the front windows and installed large upright elephant ears (*Colocasia odora*). They are very dramatic and bright green.

The real epiphany came to Lyn one day when she was going to work. In her

garage was a wagonload of butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), rudbeckia, and echinacea that was waiting to be planted. She noticed that there were several giant caterpillars on the butterfly weed and they had eaten all the leaves on the plant. Next to the butterfly weed was a rudbeckia with several other caterpillars under the leaves. They were hanging by a thread and curved. She knew this was something special so she pulled the wagon carefully out of the garage and looked this up on the Internet. There she learned that the caterpillars were spinning chrysalis. She watched every day and photographed. This was fascinating. Eventually the seven chrysalises turned black as they are supposed to do, and out came seven monarch butterflies. They hung on the plants for several days "airing out their wings" as they could not fly yet.

Right then and there Lyn made the decision to transform her entire lawn into a butterfly garden with stone pathways. So out she went and proceeded to turn the rest of her front yard into a butterfly garden. To do this she and her son John sheet mulched it. They scalped her remaining grass down to its roots, then laid

down two layers of cardboard (sans tape and staples), and put down 12 inches of topsoil and mulch. They then let it sit for several weeks. The process of planting began. Lyn had spent all summer collecting plants. She defined her corners of the bed by planting *Abelia* 'Kaleidoscope'. She duplicated the plantings that were thriving in her first corner bed, filling the bed with plants that are tough, drought tolerant, and a buffet for all the pollinators – bees, the butterflies, and many others.

Pesterfield really believes in what she is doing. She has learned that grass is a desert for pollinators. It takes courage to dig up your entire front lawn and install a garden in it from corner to corner that is beneficial to all the insects. All the while she has done this in a neighborhood of green lawns. There have been a few stares from the "walkers." But Lyn is confident that this is a good thing. Everyday as she pulls away to work she knows that the pollinators are working hard in the paradise she has provided for them. ☺

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