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A “rubric” is simply a scoring tool that lists criteria for a project that will be evaluated. There is an online version of this document here: <http://monarchawardshamilton.org/rubric.html> . The online version includes links for each of the knowledge points (the document rows) that will help explain the criteria.

This document will help Monarch Awards applicants understand how their gardens will be assessed. Applicants are encouraged to use it to evaluate and improve their gardens before applying. As well, organizers and judges will use it to decide whether a garden meets the Monarch Award standard.



For resources and more information on these criteria areas, visit www.monarchawardshamilton.org/resources/ If you have questions about any of the criteria or the scoring matrix, please email admin@monarchawardshamilton.org

Soil

Points/Grade Knowledge →
↓
Understand the soil textures in your garden areas (clay, silt, sand)

5	3	0	-1
Excellent	progressing well	Needs Improvement	Red Flags
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> almost all plants are species adapted to the existing soil texture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most of the plants are adapted to existing soil. Some attempts to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> significant work is being done to change soil texture to suit the needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use of peat products or sand “break clay”

Soil

Points/Grade Knowledge  

	5 Excellent	3 progressing well soil texture have been made	0 Needs Improvement of desired plants	-1 Red Flags
Understand the concept of soil pH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grow plants adapted to the existing soil pH / parent rock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some attempts to change soil pH, in small areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> major work to change pH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> significant and long-term efforts to change pH over large area
Understand the importance of microbes and soil-dwelling creatures to healthy soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organic matter (OM) is spread on top organic fertilizers used sparingly and wisely compaction relieved and reduced only where and when necessary soil disturbance/digging minimized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OM incorporated into top few inches organic fertilizers used regularly organic (“natural”) herbicides/ pesticides used occasionally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OM incorporated deeper than 12” occasional spading, inverting soil layers, double-digging organic (“natural”) herbicides/pesticides used routinely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> soil routinely / annually disturbed with digging or rototilling soil fauna deprived of water and air by over- or under-watering use of chemical fertilizers any use of systemic or chemical pesticides / herbicides
Understand the role of mulch and compost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mulch used only as appropriate (new gardens, paths) mulch readily decomposes (leaves, wood chips) mulch sourced on site or from neighbourhood compost made on site or in-situ some area(s) left unmulched for ground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mulch is cedar, bark, or pine needles, rocks liberal (3”+) and regular use of mulch use of purchased bagged mulch/compost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mulch is dyed, non organic (rubber) large areas are left uncovered (no plant cover/ no canopy, no mulch, plants, or duff) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> routine additions of “topsoil” use of “weed barriers” (landscape cloth, rubber) mulch “volcanoes” around tree/shrub trunks

Soil

Points/Grade Knowledge →
↓

5	3	0	-1
Excellent bee nesting	progressing well	Needs Improvement	Red Flags

Plants

Points/Grade Knowledge →
↓

	5	3	0	-1
Understand the importance of plants that are native to our eco-region and eco-zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 70% of the planting area is occupied by native plants, trees, shrubs many plants of each species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 – 50% of the planting area is occupied by native plants several plants of each species “nativars” chosen wisely (changes not affecting ecological function) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> less than 30% of the planting area is occupied by native plants only one plant of each species “nativars” that have altered flower colour / shape/ bloom time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> garden dominated by non-natives non natives are in prominent/ best spots
Understand the problems caused by invasive plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all invasive species have been removed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work is underway to remove invasives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some attempt to manage invasives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> invasives allowed to produce seed and spread
“Right Plant - Right Place”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> plant communities: species that occur together naturally in this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> species grouped / sited according to water/sun/soil needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> plants sited mainly for aesthetic reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> plants routinely fail because of improper siting
Understand the importance of plant diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> something always blooming: early-, mid- and late- season abundant species many different flower forms, shapes, colours, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a few gaps in bloom times many different species some diversity in flower form, shape, colour, height 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> garden dominated by a few robust species that are managed little diversity in flower form, shape, colour, height 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unmanaged aggressive species allowed to dominate

Plants

Points/Grade Knowledge	5 excellent	3 progressing well	0 needs improvement	-1 (red flag)
Density / layers / vertical elements to provide varied habitat height & type, light; reduce need for mulch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> plantings mimic natural habitats plantings have depth and tiers very dense plantings minimize need for mulch, staking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some layers and tiers evident most borders less than 3' wide some use of underplanting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> plants in single rows or rigid shapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most plants are grown as specimens, not part of larger plantings
Proportion of garden to gardenable area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all garden ; no turfgrass / lawn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proportion of lawn to garden is small 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lawn is prominent feature a large property with a small garden 	
Accommodate garden fauna (birds, pollinators, and other insects) in winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> several conifers/evergreens allow seeds to remain for birds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a few conifers/evergreens some deadheading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no conifers everything trimmed/deadheaded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> garden is "cut down" in fall and trimmings removed shrubs wrapped in netting

Water

Points/Grade Knowledge	5 excellent	3 progressing well	0 needs improvement	-1 (red flag)
Understand water / rainfall management as a system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all downspouts disconnected roof water flows into rain barrel, garden, or rain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most downspouts disconnected water flows onto lawn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> downspouts empty onto pavement or into storm sewer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> downspouts empty into neighbour's property rain barrel is neglected and/or improperly used

Water

Points/Grade Knowledge → ↓	5 excellent	3 progressing well	0 needs improvement	-1 (red flag)
Minimize use of city water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> garden water from rain barrels used first plants chosen to reduce dependence on city water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> city water is used sparingly and wisely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> city water is used exclusively no conservation effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> watering systems on programmed schedules/timers soil never allowed to dry out
All creatures need water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clean water is provided for insects, birds and/or wildlife “ramp” not “deep dive” for water access by all creatures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wildlife has access to human-centered water source (pond / water feature) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no water source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chlorinated pool is only water source

Cultural Practices

Points/Grade Knowledge → ↓	5 excellent	3 progressing well	0 needs improvement	-1 (red flag)
An ecosystem/food web approach that understands that all systems and creatures, from microbes to mammals, are interdependent. All creatures must eat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accept most insect activity/ feeding encourage messiness provide logs and bare soil for insects / ground-dwelling bees minimal or no “clean up” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accept some insect activity/feeding tolerate messiness use of bee boxes and other products wait until late spring to “clean up” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no concern for/ awareness of food web a tidy, “clean” garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use of pesticides use of herbicides “cleaning up” in the fall or early spring excessive effort to control pests

Cultural Practices

Points/Grade Knowledge	5 excellent	3 progressing well	0 needs improvement	-1 (red flag)
<p>→</p> <p>↓</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide for all parts of insects' life cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide for nectar/adult feeding stage of insects' life cycle 		
Understand the societal and neighbourhood impact of how we work our land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work is done by hand most of the time, if possible or practicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work is done by hand some of the time if possible or practicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use of power tools most of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> leaf blowers, noisy power tools, two-stroke engines
Increase plant health / reduce plant stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proper planting methods for perennials, shrubs, trees right plant/right place (sun/moisture/wind) evidence of proper care for all plants, esp. diseased / damaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some evidence of improper planting evidence of proper care for most plants most plants situated appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> neglect of diseased or damaged plants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mulch "volcanoes" burlap/cages left on withholding water in first year improper / excessive use of fertilizer
Planting plans that work with nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> plant densely so canopies touch, provide shade, decrease need for off-site mulch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most plants are isolated / grown as specimens (too much space between mature plants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> blank spaces allowed to fill with unwanted plant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encroachment onto existing natural areas/ravines pruning and cutting in existing natural areas plant "dumping" into natural areas
Prune wisely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> respect for the mature natural size/shape of plants / shrubs / trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> correctly made pruning cuts to maintain health of plant pruning done at appropriate time/season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> correctly made pruning cuts to control form/size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pruning/shaping at wrong time incorrect pruning cuts aggressive pruning to

Cultural Practices

Points/Grade Knowledge → ↓	5 excellent	3 progressing well	0 needs improvement	-1 (red flag)
				control shape
Wise lawn care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> turfgrass cut infrequently / as necessary, to 3" or longer, trimmings left lawn allowed to go dormant in summer heat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> turfgrass is regularly cut to 3" or longer, trimmings left 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> occasional short mowing with clippings left some interventions to maintain lawn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> routine short mowing with clippings removed regular interventions to maintain lush look all season

Materials / Hardscaping

Points/Grade Knowledge → ↓	5 excellent	3 progressing well	0 needs improvement	-1 (red flag)
Understand the impact of manufactured materials in the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use materials that will eventually decompose, not end up in landfill use of recycled / reclaimed materials choices reflect energy used to manufacture/ transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "landfill" materials used in some parts of yard choices with some regard for energy used to manufacture/ transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> choices with little regard for energy used to manufacture/ transport 	
Materials purchased locally, from local sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> few 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stone from non-Ontario quarries
Understand importance of permeability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most driveways, paths, patios, walkways are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some driveways, paths, patios, walkways are 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> majority of property is patio/deck/pool/impervio

Materials / Hardscaping

Points/Grade →	5	3	0	-1
Knowledge ↓	excellent	progressing well	needs improvement	(red flag)
	permeable	permeable		us surface

Aesthetics

Points/Grade → Knowledge ↓	5 excellent	3 progressing well	0 needs improvement	-1 (red flag)
<p>A basic understanding of design principles: form, texture, colour, unity, contrast</p> <p>Plants chosen for human experience as well as ecological function</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deep (at least 3') borders • tiers / layers of plants of various heights/shapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diverse heights/forms with obvious attempts at organization • sensory experience present but visual dominates • visitors not encouraged to get close 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few attempts at organization • it's all about "the look" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reliance on foliage for interest
<p>Supports a new garden aesthetic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-traditional/naturalized plantings are celebrated (signs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-traditional/naturalized plantings are used but not prioritized • attempts to slowly improve or modify traditional plantings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • traditional "curb appeal" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nothing has changed in years • rigid, formal plantings • reliance on traditional annuals
<p>Garden "plays nice" with others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considered asset to streetscape • much evidence of influence on neighbours' gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some evidence of influence on nearby gardens 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creates conflict with neighbours