



BACKGROUND

Catchfly Commons is the name Terri and Randy Litchfield gave their home landscape in 2023 after gardening there for over twenty years. The garden is an interconnected place of native plants, creatures, land, and watershed. It is also an informal gathering place and demonstration garden for people interested in biodiverse landscapes. It is a *commons* for nature and humans. Royal Catchfly (*Silene regia*), which is listed as threatened in Ohio, is a distinctive plant thriving in many areas of the garden. It symbolizes beauty and resilience in this place, *Catchfly Commons*.

Catchfly Commons is a 1.3 acre residential property on the south side of Delaware in central Ohio. It is within the Olen-tangy River watershed. Catchfly Commons hosts approximately 275 species of native herbaceous plants, shrubs, and trees planted in a variety of light, moisture, and soil conditions.

The property was mostly lawn with a few garden beds when the Litchfields purchased the property in 2001. Sustainability and simple living programs raised awareness of the importance of native plants which led to the creation of a prairie plant garden and raised beds for vegetables. In an impromptu fashion, beds were gradually expanded and added to make room for new plants of interest and to reduce lawn.

Three factors fostered the evolution of a unifying purpose and design for the landscape. First, Terri and then Randy became OSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers and the program developed their general gardening skills. Second, Doug Tallamy's approach advocating gardening for eco-function and biodiversity (*Bringing Nature Home*) provided a sense of intentionality and purpose. Third, involvement with research, conferences, and mentors created a knowledge base about native plants, biodiversity, and design. A conversation with a landscape design consultant helped the Litchfields create a master plan for the property.

In 2016, the entire west side yard was converted to native plantings. In 2017, the master plan was implemented via a large border spanning the entire west side of the backyard. At the same time, a native plant border surrounding vegetable beds and native plant nursery beds was added. Catchfly Commons has converted over 9,000 square feet of lawn.

Biodiversity has flourished with the extensive native plantings. The Litchfields continue to learn about the flora and fauna in Catchfly Commons aided by macrophotography and tools such as iNaturalist. As of July 2023, they have observed 41 species of adult butterflies and moths, 22 species of caterpillars, 19 species of bees, 14 species of wasps/hornets, and ten species of dragonflies and damselflies. Twenty-five species of birds have been observed on the property.

The garden was featured in the March/April 2023 edition of *Ohio Magazine* ("[How to Plant a Native Ohio Garden](#)"). It received first place for Native Plant Garden in the 2018 *Columbus Dispatch* Backyard Garden Awards. The landscape is a certified wildlife habitat with the National Wildlife Federation and is registered with Home Grown National Parks.

Visits to Catchfly Commons may be scheduled by emailing catchflycommons@gmail.com. The Litchfields typically host an Open Garden in July. Terri and Randy give presentations about native plant gardening to local groups and garden clubs.