

My adventures with a pretty weed by Joy Walker

Daucus carota L. Apiaceae Parsley Family

A.K.A. Queen Anne's lace, devil's-plague, Bird's nest, carotte sauvage

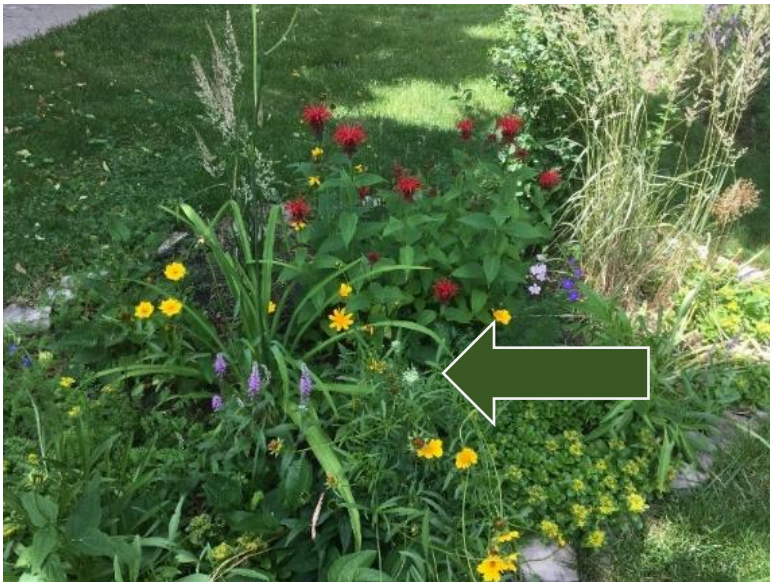
One day a couple of years ago, I was walking under a viaduct when I noticed the pretty, lacy flower I've always called Queen Anne's lace. I thought to myself, a weed is just a plant in the wrong place and I like this flower so I will take it home and put it where it will look lovely in the fall when it blooms.

I returned with a trowel and a little pot and carefully dug up the plant and brought it home 😊



This plant has a tap root that smells a bit like a carrot or parsley or something in between. My new plant was very happy in my little garden, probably surprised to find itself in such rich and nutritious soil. I thought the flowers were pretty. I thought I was giving an unappreciated “weed” a chance to be admired. I thought this was a good idea.

You can just see the little beauty, a delicate spot of white in front of the red monarda, nestled between the coreopsis. One lacy white flower.



Now I want you to imagine the music from the sorcerer's apprentice playing in the background. A weed is not JUST a plant in the wrong place, a weed is a plant that knows how to survive and flourish and aggressively take over territory. The next summer there were white lacy flowers all over my yard – in one year one had become hundreds!!



So, I looked up Queen Anne's lace in a book on weeds and found out that this plant has other names – devil's plague to give one of them. This did not sound good. I am so glad I looked the plant up and learned a bit about it before I began to pull it up. It turns out the root is full of a neurotoxin. It would be very important to wear gloves while taming this plant. And it required some digging to get that tap root out of the ground.

It's been three years since I brought home this one flower. I've pulled up more devil's plague than I can count and this plant continues to celebrate finding my rich garden soil and continues to thrive. Now when I see pretty weeds growing in wild places, I leave them be. Another name for this plant is *carotte sauvage* (savage carrot), and savage things should be left alone in wild places.