



## *Hyde Park Hidden Treasures*

Bees zigzag among the prairie flowers of an impromptu Hyde Park garden sandwiched between a building and a parking lot.

Their flight is caught on film by Michael LaBarbera, PhD, professor of organismal biology and anatomy, who picked up his camera last summer to document the insects of his Chicago neighborhood.

His six-block treks between home and office stretched to 45 minutes as LaBarbera searched tree trunks, flower beds and shrubs for his fingertip-sized subjects. By summer's end, LaBarbera had photographed more than 100 species.

"I trained my eye to look differently," he said. "Once you do that, you don't go back."

When LaBarbera showed his biology class the images, students guessed the bright red, orange and green creatures — some glistening against dewy leaves, others covered in iridescent spikes — were native to South American rainforests or African jungles. Surely these bugs were too eye-catching to have gone unnoticed here.

But that they did — until LaBarbera woke up the community with his camera lens, presenting to standing-room-only audiences at the Hyde Park Historical Society and speaking to neighborhood groups about his project.

— *Katie Brandt*



On these pages  
*Photos by Michael LaBarbera*

