

The Majestic Monarch



The **monarch butterfly** (*Danaus plexippus*) is a milkweed butterfly in the family *Nymphalidae*. It may be the most familiar North American butterfly with an easily recognizable orange and black pattern on its wings.

Each fall monarchs migrate to central Mexico where they overwinter in large clusters on trees in the mountains. They return in the spring with the females laying eggs on milkweed plants, the only plants on which monarch larvae will feed. At the end of summer, after 3-4 generations, the migration starts again.

While caterpillars need milkweed to feed on, the adults need nectar for water and energy. To create habitats for monarchs it is necessary to grow both milkweed and nectar plants.

Due to an increasing loss of milkweed habitats, the monarch populations are in dramatic decline.

They need our help!

FASCINATING FACTS

It has a wingspan of 8.9–10.2 cm (3½–4 in).

A fully-grown monarch caterpillar can weigh 2000 times more than when it first hatched from the egg.

Monarchs that fly to Mexico and return in the spring can live up to nine months.

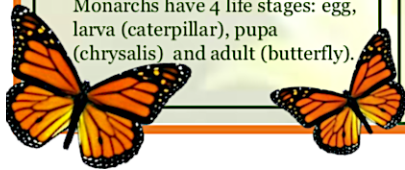
It takes at least 2 months for monarchs to fly from the north to the Mexican overwintering areas.

Monarchs have 4 life stages: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis) and adult (butterfly).

A Sampling of Host & Nectar Plants for Monarch Gardens

- Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*, *A. incarnata*, *A. tuberosa*)
- Wild blue Indigo (*Baptisia*)
- Tickseed (*Coropsis*)
- Coneflower (*Echinacea*)
- Blazing Star (*Liastris*)
- Lobelia*
- Bee Balm (*Monarda*)
- Blue Sage (*Salvia*)
- Aster (*Symphotrichum*)
- Ironweed (*Veronica*)
- Viburnum*
- Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium*)
- Sneezeweed (*Helenium*)
- Spicebush (*Lindera*)
- Sunflower (*Helianthus*)

PROVIDE A VARIETY OF PLANTS TO ENSURE CONSTANT BLOOM THROUGHOUT THE SEASON



*www.MonarchWatch.org

WHY IS THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY THREATENED WITH EXTINCTION?

One of the major threats pushing monarchs toward extinction is the near-eradication of milkweed, the monarch caterpillar's only food source, from Midwestern cropland where most monarchs were once born. Milkweed has fallen victim to skyrocketing use of the herbicide glyphosate (also known under brand name Roundup®) sprayed on genetically engineered Roundup Ready® corn and soybeans now planted on more than 150 million acres of land. Studies show that monarchs lay nearly four times more eggs per plant on milkweed growing in cropland than in other areas, making its loss even more harmful to monarchs. Additional habitat is being lost to urban sprawl and to conversion of natural habitat areas to genetically engineered corn fields to produce ethanol for biofuel. Climate change is another primary threat to the monarch butterfly. *



WHAT CAN I DO?

Plant milkweed - the monarch's host plant.

Provide nectar plants for mature monarchs for energy and water.

Enhance the garden by incorporating other elements other than plants:

- Shelter from wind and rain.
- Create wet, sandy or muddy spots for butterflies to imbibe salts & nutrients.
- Supply a location with dark stones or tiles for butterflies to perch on to warm up on cool mornings.
- Limit the use of pesticides in the milkweed area & follow EPA recommendations.



Compliments of Gates Mills Garden Club

www.Gatesmillsgardenclub.org



At left are two photographs of common milkweed. The seed pods will mature and open. The silky parachutes carry the seeds away propagating milkweed plants.

