



# Wild for Monarchs

*Monarch memories last a lifetime. Plant a native butterfly garden or habitat, and create your own moments to remember.*

## Planting a Native Plant Butterfly Habitat Garden?

Butterfly gardeners show they care deeply about the environment and their connection to nature. While providing food and shelter for monarchs and other pollinators, they also help to conserve native plants, reduce habitat fragmentation and increase biodiversity in the landscapes. Healthy ecosystems directly affect the quality of our food, water and air—and what could be more important than that?

### Steps for Success

- 1. Preparation:** Evaluate your site and choose a spot with at least six hours of sunlight. Simply add native plants to an existing garden, or replace a patch of lawn. If replacing a lawn, start with a clean planting bed and remove non-native vegetation if necessary. Select plant species that match the light, soil, pH and moisture conditions of your garden plot. See: [wildones.org/landscap.html](http://wildones.org/landscap.html)
- 2. Design Considerations:** To be visually appealing, select native plant species of varied heights that bloom at different times. These plants will provide nectar for adult butterflies throughout the season. Don't forget to include native grasses such as little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) not only for contrast, but also to help keep the blooming forbs upright. If it all possible, plant at least two types of milkweed for Monarchs and then additional host species for caterpillars of other butterfly species. Enhance your garden by adding a butterfly puddling spot and small brush pile for over-wintering species like mourning cloak butterflies. Take a "before" photo of site.
- 3. Plant Selection:** Make a sketch of the planting plan, and perhaps color-code bloom times for early, mid-season and late flowers. Fall blossoming nectar-rich plants are particularly important to migrating Monarchs. Make a list of your plant species and check the number needed. Allow for sufficient room between plants as they mature. Mulch to provide an initial weed barrier. Find a reputable native plant nursery that carries plants and seeds from your area (local genotype) and uses best management practices appropriate for sensitive ecosystems. If seeding, use a nurse crop of annual oats to reduce weed growth.
- 4. Maintenance:** At first, water regularly, remove weeds and keep mulched until the garden is established. Try being pesticide-free since this garden is wildlife food. Some butterfly gardeners cut back some stalks of summer milkweed (late June or early July) to force new leaves for Monarch caterpillars -- be sure to transfer any eggs or larvae to plants that you don't cut back. Later in the season (August-September), practice benign neglect! In the fall, leave some dead leaves and stalks to provide overwintering sites for pollinators. Go back to your garden plan and update. Take an "after" photo of your garden.
- 5. Register your Butterfly Garden habitat.** Monarch Watch (MW) and the North America Butterfly Association (NABA) provide butterfly garden certifications. The Monarch Watch Waystation certification program encourages the planting of places that provide necessary resources for Monarchs to produce successive generations and sustain their migration. The NABA program promotes habitat for butterflies, as well as other pollinators. If your Waystation or NABA butterfly habitat garden is planted in at least 75% native species, you can also be recognized by Wild Ones. See Native Plant Butterfly Garden Recognition instructions below.
- 6. Monitor:** Keep records of Monarchs observed. [Monarchjointventure.org](http://Monarchjointventure.org) provides contacts for several monitoring programs to consider. Each week or two keep track of your observations, such as which plants are preferred by butterflies and other pollinators as host plants and nectar or pollen sources. Take photos of the garden throughout the season and share your favorites on the Wild Ones website. See instructions below.
- 7. Share** your seeds or divisions of plants to help start another butterfly garden! Invite others to visit your garden or habitat to enjoy the beauty of the butterflies in the natural landscape you created.

## “Without Milkweeds there can be no monarchs” – Douglas W. Tallamy

### Host Plants for Monarchs:

Monarch larvae feed exclusively on milkweeds. Plant at least ten individual milkweed plants in your butterfly garden, if possible. Choose at least two different species. Wild Ones recommends you include common milkweed since it is the Monarch's preferred species of milkweed. It may grow into large clumps, but if there is room in your garden, please include it.

These are the native milkweed species that are recommended by MW, NABA and Wild Ones for the northeast monarch migration region (Midwest and Northeast USA):

- Common Milkweed** (*Asclepias syriaca*)
- Swamp Milkweed** (*Asclepias incarnata*)
- Butterfly Milkweed** (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
- Purple Milkweed** (*Asclepias purpurascens*)
- Prairie Milkweed** (*Asclepias sullivanti*)
- Whorled Milkweed** (*Asclepias verticillata*)
- Poke Milkweed** (*Asclepias exaltata*)



Photo by Pam Wolfe

### Why Native Plants Matter

Butterflies and moths depend generally on native plants as their larval host plants. In the case of monarchs, milkweed species are critical for their survival. Whenever possible, grow local genotype and local ecotype native plants that have co-evolved in their native habitats with other plants, and wildlife such as insect pollinators. Local native plants are vigorous and hardy. Adapted to their region, local ecotypes can survive winter cold and summer heat. The deep roots of native plants, especially those of prairie plants, trees and shrubs, hold soil, control erosion and withstand droughts. Native plants, once established, will require less watering and may support natural pest control. To prevent the local extinction of native flora, plants should be bought from reputable nurseries and not dug from natural areas. For local genotype/ecotype guidelines: [wildones.org/land/ecotype.html](http://wildones.org/land/ecotype.html)

### Nectar Plants:

Nectar plants provide food for adult monarchs and other pollinators throughout the season. Pick from early, mid and late flowering species and have at least three different kinds of plants in bloom at any time. Include the mid-season flowering milkweeds. Not only will you offer a dependable food source to the Monarchs, but your butterfly garden will have visual interest all year long.

Try growing some of these native plants in your butterfly garden or habitat. (Species listed alphabetically according to scientific names.)

### Early Nectar Plants:

#### Shrubs:

- Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*, *A. laevis*, *A. interior*)
- Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)
- Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
- Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)
- Pussy willow (*Salix discolor*)
- Wild blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*, *V. angustifolium*)

#### Forbs:

- Wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)
- Spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*)
- Wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)
- Wild lupine (*Lupinus perennis*)
- Foxglove beard-tongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)
- Wild phlox (*Phlox divaricata*)



Photo by Vickie Bonk

Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*)  
Common blue violet (*Viola sororia*, *Viola* spp.)

**Mid-Season Nectar Plants:**

Shrubs and Vines:

Leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*)  
New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*)  
Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)  
Sundrops (*Oenothera fruticosa*)  
Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)  
Sumac (*Rhus typhina*, *Rhus glabra*, *Rhus* spp.)  
White meadowsweet (*Spiraea alba*)

Forbs:

Nodding wild onion (*Allium cernuum*)  
Dogbane (*Apocynum cannabinum*, *A. androsaemifolium*)\*  
Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)  
Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)  
Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)  
Wild blue indigo (*Baptisia australis*)  
Partridge pea (*Cassia fasciculata*)  
Tall thistle (*Cirsium altissimum*)  
Swamp thistle (*Cirsium muticum*)  
Coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*, *C. tripteris*, *Coreopsis* spp.)  
Pale purple coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*)  
Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)  
Rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*)  
Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)  
Joe pye weed (*Eutrochium maculatum*, *E. purpureum*)  
False sunflower (*Heliopsis helianthoides*)  
Round-headed bush-clover (*Lespedeza capitata*)  
Blazing star (*Liatris spicata*, *Liatris ligulistylis*, *Liatris* spp.)  
Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)  
Dotted horsemint (*Monarda punctata*)  
Common cinquefoil (*Potentilla simplex*)  
Mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*)  
Yellow prairie coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*)  
Orange coneflower (*Rudbeckia fulgida*)  
Blackeyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)  
Wild senna (*Senna hebecarpa*)  
Purple stemmed aster (*Symphotrichum puniceum*)  
Hoary vervain (*Verbena stricta*)  
Culver's root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*)  
Golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*)

\*Not a milkweed species.

**Late Flowering Nectar Plants:**

Shrubs:

Witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

Forbs:

False aster (*Boltonia asteroides*)  
Sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*)  
Calico aster (*Symphotrichum laterifolius*)  
Stiff goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*)



Photo by Laura Heiden



Photo by Judy Dircks



Photo by Janet Geisen



Photo by Becky Ericksen

Showy goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*)  
 Heath aster (*Symphyotrichum ericoides*)  
 Smooth aster (*Symphyotrichum laevis*)  
 New England aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)  
 Ironweed (*Vernonia gigantea*, *V. missurica*)



Photo by Janet Allen

For information and plant lists specific to your region, please contact your nearest Wild Ones chapter or visit our national website: [wildones.org](http://wildones.org)

**Other Helpful Resources:**

*Bringing Nature Home, How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants* by Douglas W. Tallamy, 2nd Ed

*Urban and Suburban Meadows, Bringing Meadows to Big and Small Spaces!* by Catherine Zimmerman

Wild Ones: *Wild Ones Journals* and *The Inside Story* by Janice Stiefel available from the Wild Store

*Butterfly Gardening: Creating Summer Magic in Your Garden* by The Xerces Society & The Smithsonian Institution

*Milkweed, Monarchs and More* by Ba Rea, Karen Oberhauser and Michael Quinn, updated 2nd Ed

Monarch Watch’s Bring Back the Monarchs program: [monarchwatch.org/bring-back-the-monarchs/campaign](http://monarchwatch.org/bring-back-the-monarchs/campaign)

Monarch Joint Venture: [monarchjointventure.org](http://monarchjointventure.org)

North American Butterfly Association: [naba.org](http://naba.org)

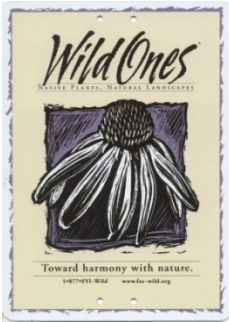
**Want to get more involved?**

- Collect native milkweed seed and encourage others to grow milkweeds on their property. For details [wildones.org/land/monarch/](http://wildones.org/land/monarch/)
- Join local efforts to protect and restore natural areas and monitor pollinators. Encourage land stewards of parks, preserves and wildlife areas to include more milkweed species in their restorations.
- Talk to your friends, family and neighbors about the role of pollinators in food production and ecosystem health.
- Lots of space? Plant native trees for butterflies and moths including oak, cherry, willow and hackberry.
- Keep outdoor lighting turned off at night—light pollution may be harmful to some pollinators.
- Does your state follow a Roadsides for Wildlife program? If not, why not help start one? Work with your township to reduce roadside mowing if there are native species remaining. See [xerces.org/pollinator-conservation-roadsides/](http://xerces.org/pollinator-conservation-roadsides/)
- Find out about policy issues that affect pollinators and share information with your government representatives.
- Join your state’s landscape register to be alerted to use of pesticide applications in your neighborhood by landscapers.

**Need more milkweeds?** Contact local native plant growers or contact your local Wild Ones chapter for information on their next plant sale. You can also order directly from Monarch Watch.

**Wild Ones Native Plant Butterfly Garden Recognition and Sign:** You don’t have to be certified by MW or NABA to be recognized by Wild Ones. If you are, the application process is just quicker. Go to [wildones.org/learn/wild](http://wildones.org/learn/wild) for monarchs or contact [monarch@wildones.org](mailto:monarch@wildones.org) to find out more about applying for recognition through Wild Ones and purchasing a yard sign. Please also share your native garden habitat photos by uploading to the Wild Ones DropBox.

**Local Wild Ones Chapter Contact Information:** [wildones.org/chapters/foxvalley/](http://wildones.org/chapters/foxvalley/)





**Wild Ones, Native Plants, Natural Landscapes:** promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a national not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization. [www.wildones.org](http://www.wildones.org)