

# How To Make a Monarch Habitat

## CALIFORNIA



The monarchs found in California are Western monarchs. These butterflies do not winter in Mexico, but in coastal California. They are more endangered than Eastern monarchs, with far fewer left. Monarchs need two types of plants: milkweed for the caterpillars and nectar-producing flowering plants for adults. **The milkweed is critical, since the caterpillars will only eat milkweed.** Adults will eat many types of nectar-producing flowering plants, but you must ensure that the plants in your garden are flowering when the monarchs are flying over your area. Choose native plants that will attract other pollinators, as well.

### - Example Nectar Plants -

#### **Pacific Aster (*Symphotrichum chilense*)**

- Full sun
- Clay, loamy soil

#### **Goldenrod (*Solidago californica*)**

- Full sun
- Moist to dry soil

#### **Sunflowers**

- Full sun; average soil

#### **Mountain Monardella (*Monardella odoratissima*)**

- Full sun to partial shade
- Dry to moist soil

#### **Rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa*)**

- Full sun, average soil



### - Milkweed Plants -

#### **Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)**

- Full sun to part shade; good for urban soils

#### **Broadleaf Milkweed (*Asclepias latifolia*)**

- Full sun
- Sandy soil

#### **Narrowleaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*)**

- Full to partial sun; clay to sandy soil

#### **California Milkweed (*Asclepias californica*)**

- Full to partial sun
- Moist to sandy soil

#### **Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)**

- Full sun
- Dry to average soil

#### **Desert Milkweed (*Asclepias erosa*)**

- Full sun; sandy soil

#### **Swamp or Pink Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)**

- Up to five feet tall
- Full sun, moist soil

Do NOT use Tropical Milkweed; it is an invasive and might be bad for monarchs.

# Example Habitats

There are several ways to make an inviting garden for Monarchs. And even a small space can work! And remember to never, ever use pesticides on plants that Monarchs may eat.

## CONTAINER GARDEN

For those of you with limited space, a container garden is ideal. Plant both your milkweed and your flowering plants in plastic pots. Larger pots are preferable, as these plants have large root systems that need space to grow. Be sure to check soil moisture regularly, as containers dry faster than the ground. You may also overwinter your containers in an unheated garage or shed.

See [here](#) for more tips on creating a monarch container garden.



## LARGER MONARCH HABITAT

If you have the space, you can plant a larger monarch garden in the ground. First you must remove all grasses and weeds. Then plant one or more types of milkweed, depending on the sun and soil conditions of your garden. Also add nectar-producing flowering plants, making sure that some are flowering when monarchs are expected in your area. You may also add a “butterfly bath.” You can buy them commercially or make your own using a shallow dish with sand covering the bottom, adding just enough water to cover the sand. See [here](#) for more information on creating a larger habitat.

## Places to buy milkweed and nectar plants

Note: we suggest buying small milkweed plants. Milkweed seeds require cold stratification, which means that they will not germinate unless exposed to cold temperatures that slowly warm.

[Prairie Moon](#), will ship nationally

[American Meadows](#), will ship nationally

[Larner Seeds](#), San Francisco (only sells seeds)

[Milkweed Experts](#), near Sacramento

[Butterfly Encounters](#), near San Francisco (only sells seeds)

[Theodore Payne Foundation](#), near Los Angeles

[Blue Moon Native](#), near Monterey (will ship, but only sells seeds)