

How To Make a Monarch Habitat

MIDWEST



Monarchs arrive to breed in the Midwest in the early summer. 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 -

Goldenrods (Gray, stiff)

- Full sun
- Clay to sandy soil

Ontario Blazing Star (*Liatris cylindracea*)

- Full sun, average to dry soil

Purple Coneflowers (*Echinacea purpurea*)

- Full sun; moist, well-drained soil

Black-Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

- Full sun
- Moderately dry soil

False Boneset (*Brickellia eupatorioides*)

- Full sun, dry soil



- Milkweed Plants -

Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)

- Full sun to part shade; good for urban soils

Swamp or Pink Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)

- Up to five feet tall
- Full sun, moist

Poke Milkweed (*Asclepias exaltata*)

- Full sun to partial shade
- Moist, well-drained soil

Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*)

- Full sun, moist to dry; good for urban areas

Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)*

- Up to three feet tall
- Sandy or drier soil

*Not to be confused with Butterfly Bush, an invasive that you should not plant.

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

[Garden Heights Nursery](#), St. Louis, MO (will ship)

[Pure Air Natives](#), St. Louis, MO

[Missouri Wildflowers Nursery](#), Jefferson City, MO (will ship)

[Blazing Star Gardens](#), McHenry County, IL

[Spence Restoration Nursery](#), Muncie, IN

[Restoration Nurseries](#), Broadhead, WI