

How To Make a Monarch Habitat

NORTHERN PLAINS AND WESTERN CANADA



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-Producing Plants -

Goldenrod (Canada and Grass-leaved varieties)

- Full sun; average to dry soil

Sunflowers

- Full sun; average soil

Pacific Aster (*Symphyotrichum chilense*)

- Full sun
- Clay, loamy soil

Spider Flower (*Cleome hassleriana*)

- Full sun
- Average to moist soil

Ironweed

- Partial sun; rich, moist soil

Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*)

- Full to partial sun; moist soil



- Milkweed Plants -

Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)

- Full sun to part shade; good for urban soils

Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)

- Full sun

- Dry to average soil

Swamp or Pink Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)

- Up to five feet tall
- Full sun, moist

Broadleaf Milkweed (*Asclepias latifolia*)

- Full sun
- Sandy soil

Narrowleaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*)

- Full to partial sun; clay to sandy soil

Spider Milkweed (*Asclepias viridis*)

- Full sun; dry 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. You may plant one or more types of milkweed, depending on the sun and soil conditions of your garden. Then 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 is difficult to grow from seed, as they require cold stratification, which simply means that they will not germinate unless exposed to cold temperatures that slowly warm.

[Prairie Moon](#), will ship

[American Meadows](#), will ship

[High Country Gardens](#), will ship

[The Prairie Flower](#), somewhere near Sioux City, IA

[Pheasants Forever](#), Nelson, NE