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Monarchs & Other Butterflies

VERY IMPORTANT: Butterflies and moths are insects and insecticides will kill them. Don't use pesticides if you want butterflies and moths! And don't buy plants treated with systemic pesticides such as neonicotinoids (Ex. Safari). They permeate the plant, don't wash off, and their toxicity persists even in the soil.

Native nectar plants

Include plants (species, **not cultivars**) that bloom in spring **and** summer **and** fall for the adults. Plant **large** patches. And plant **lots** of patches.

NOTE: Buddleia (aka butterfly bush) is NOT recommended! It's not native, isn't a host plant, and invades natural areas.

Some SPRING nectar sources:

Wild plums / wild cherries (*Prunus spp.*)
Blue flag iris (*Iris versicolor*)
Wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)
Violets (*Viola spp.*)

Some SUMMER nectar sources:

Milkweeds (*Asclepias spp.*)
Coneflowers (*Echinacea spp.*)
Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), bergamot (*M. fistulosa*)
New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*)
Sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)
Coreopsis/Tickseed (*Coreopsis spp.*)
Sunflowers (*Helianthus spp.*)
Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

Some FALL nectar sources:

Joe-pye weed, boneset, snakeroot (*Eupatorium spp.*)
Gayfeather, blazing star (*Liatris spp.*)
Goldenrods (*Solidago spp.*) They do NOT cause allergies!
New England, New York asters (*Aster spp.*)
Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia spp.*)
New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*)

Other foods for some butterflies

- * Sap from wounded trees
- * Rotting fruit
- * Even urine, dung, bird droppings

Overwintering sites

Depending on the species, butterflies overwinter as eggs, caterpillars, chrysalises, or as adult butterflies, so leave logs, leaf litter, debris etc. around your yard so they have a place to stay. **Don't be a landscaping neatnik and don't clean up too soon or too much in spring!** (They do NOT need -- nor use -- "butterfly houses"!)

Host plants for butterflies and moths

A *host plant* is the food for the butterfly's **caterpillar** stage. No host plant, no caterpillars; no caterpillars, no butterflies!

Milkweeds are the ESSENTIAL host plant for monarch caterpillars

Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*): medium to wet soil; sun to part shade; 2-4 ft; doesn't spread
Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*): wet to dry; sun to part sun; 2-4 ft; pink, fragrant; will spread
Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*): medium to dry well-drained soil; sun to part sun; 1-3 ft; orange
IMPORTANT: Do NOT plant tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*)

Host plants for some other species

Pipevine swallowtail - pipevine
Black swallowtail - zizia, dill, parsley, carrot, fennel
Giant swallowtail - prickly ash, common rue
Spicebush swallowtail - spicebush, sassafras, tulip tree
Tiger swallowtail - wild black cherry, tulip tree
Clouded sulphur - clovers, alfalfa, black locusts
Cloudless sulphur - sennas, clovers, legumes
Brown elfin - blueberries, bearberries
Banded hairstreak - oaks, hickories, butternut
Gray hairstreak - mallows
Eastern tailed blue - clovers, legumes, baptisia
Spring azure - dogwood, NJ tea, wild cherry
Hackberry, Tawny emperor - hackberry tree
Mourning cloak - willow, elm, poplar, birch, hackberry
Comma - hops, nettles, elms
Question mark - nettles, hops, hackberry, elm
Am. Lady - pussytoes, pearly everlasting, ironweed
Fritillaries (Meadow, Great spangled) - violets
Baltimore checkerspot - white turtlehead, penstemon
Crescents (Northern, Pearl) - asters
White admiral - birches, aspen, poplars
Red admiral - nettles
Silver-spotted skipper - black locust, woody legumes
Dreamy Duskywing - willows, poplar, aspen, birch
Nessus sphinx moth - grapes
Hummingbird moth - honeysuckle, hawthorn, *Prunus*
Polyphemus moth - oaks willow, maple, birch
Cecropia moth - sugar maple, cherries, plums, dogwood
Luna moth - white birch, hickories, walnuts, sumacs

Create a Monarch Waystation

If you meet these Monarch Watch requirements, you can certify your Monarch Waystation at monarchwatch.org/waystations/

Size.

There is no minimum area requirement in order to certify your habitat, but Monarch Waystations function best when they are at least 100 square feet. The total area may be split among several discrete sites at your location and there is no upper limit for the size of a Monarch Waystation habitat.

Exposure.

Most butterflies and butterfly plants need lots of sun. Ideally, your Monarch Waystation will be located in an area that receives at least six hours of sun a day.

Drainage and Soil Type.

Most native milkweeds and nectar plants are draught tolerant and do best in well-drained soils. However, there are some species that work well for wetter locations.

Shelter.

Plant milkweeds and nectar plants relatively close together, but not crowded, to provide shelter from predators and the elements.

Milkweed Plants.

We recommend that you include at least 10 milkweed plants, made up of two or more species. Different milkweed species will mature and flower at different times, providing more resources for monarchs. However, a large number of plants (>10) of one species is also sufficient.

Nectar Plants.

Monarchs and other butterflies and pollinators need nectar. By providing nectar sources that bloom sequentially or continuously during the growing season, your Monarch Waystation can provide resources for monarchs throughout the breeding season and the fall migration. A Monarch Waystation should contain several annual, biennial, or perennial plants that provide nectar for butterflies.

Management.

Have a plan to sustain a Monarch Waystation. Needs will depend on the features of your habitat, but they could include mulching, thinning, watering, eliminating insecticide use, removing invasive plant species, and incorporating additional features.

Spread the word

Not everyone knows about the importance of host plants and other management practices for butterflies and moths. Don't underestimate the power of people learning from people!

* **Display a sign** – You can purchase a Monarch Waystation sign when you have certified your Waystation

* **Talk with neighbors and passersby** about the importance of host plants, why you're planting milkweeds and other native host plants, and why you're leaving your yard a little "messy"

* **Display a "milkweed for monarchs" bumper sticker**

* **Help collect essential conservation information** by participating in monarch- and butterfly-related community science projects (below).

Be a community scientist

Anyone can be a community scientist and help collect the essential information needed for conservation!

Journey North: journeynorth.org/

Monarch Watch:

* Calendar Project - monarchwatch.org/calendar/
Download the mobile app at monarchwatch.org/app/

* Tagging - monarchwatch.org/tagging/

* **Monarch Rx:** monarchrx.org/

Learn more

Websites:

Xerces Society website: xerces.org/

Monarch Watch: monarchwatch.org/

Monarch Joint Venture: monarchjointventure.org/

Wild Ones: wildones.org/wild-for-monarchs/

Journey North: journeynorth.org/ to report sightings
Monarch (and other) resources
journeynorth.org/resources/the-monarch-life-cycle

Our Habitat Garden – an example of a CNY garden:
ourhabitatgarden.org/home/creatures/butterflies/
ourhabitatgarden.org/home/creatures/monarchs/

Books:

Xerces Society *Gardening for Butterflies* – Excellent!
Rea, Ba et.al. *Milkweed, Monarchs and More*