

The Butterfly Connection Newsletter

This Issue is Dedicated To the Monarch Butterfly



One of the most awesome creations is the monarch butterfly
It's such a thrill to watch those beautiful wings fluttering in the sky
Zealously they perform their mission of pollinating from flower to flower
Although built small and fragile, they are unique butterflies with vast power
But oh what a time they must have going through the stages of their short life
Being pursued or killed by many predators and poisoned brings such strife
They have been blessed with instinct giving them strength to fly further
As they earnestly seek sweet nectar while taking pollen to another
Autumn monarchs have a mission to put forth a big effort indeed
Following their ancestors' path south up to 2,000 miles at top speed
Sleeping through mild winter instead of a freezing death with no pardon
When they wake let's pray that the females make it to a milkweed garden
To place precious eggs that will grow into another monarch generation
Again to go through their four stages designed but not by evolution
Continuing the cycle of trying to keep our ecosystem like a park
Give thanks for where would we be without the monarch.

By
Jessica Dumas

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Important Dates

Monarch Butterfly & Pollinator
Festival , San Antonio, TX
(Oct 19-21, 2018)

California State Parks
Monarch Butterfly Tours
(To see wintering monarchs)
Mid-October through December
Sat. & Sun. from 11 am to 2 pm

For More Information
Call 831-423-4609

Why Monarchs are Special



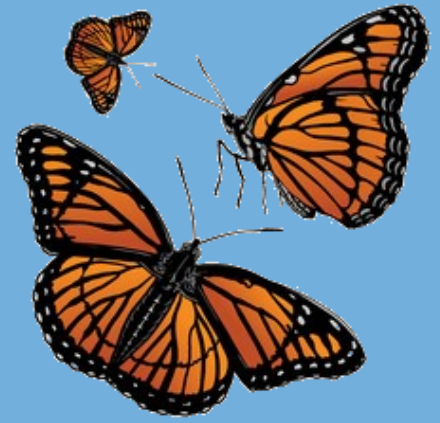
Some scientists and organizations want the monarch butterflies to be considered for the endangered species list. Even though butterflies do not do as much pollination as the bees, they are becoming more important the more the bee population dwindles. The poem says “where would we be without the monarch” because we need them as pollinators of fruit and vegetable plants and without them, we may not be able to grow many of our fruits and vegetables.

The monarch butterflies are special for many reasons such as:

- ◆ Pollination is needed for all plants and without plants, we have no oxygen.
- ◆ Pollination gives us one out of three bites of food that we eat every day.
- ◆ Many of our favorite foods would be gone without pollination.
- ◆ Out of 1,400 crop plants grown in the world, almost 80% require pollination.
- ◆ Pollination of crops is valued in the US at 10 billion dollars annually (the global value is more than 3 trillion).
- ◆ Harming the pollinators and their habitat ultimately causes us to harm ourselves.
- ◆ They have an economic value due to people wanting to travel to California and/or Mexico to see them wintering by the millions.
- ◆ There are seven states that have made the monarch their official state butterfly—Alabama, Idaho, Illinois, Minnesota, Texas, Vermont, and West Virginia.
- ◆ Monarchs are more admired than any other butterfly because of its strength and stamina during their migration journey
- ◆ Millions of children in classrooms across the nation have watched the caterpillars change into butterflies.
- ◆ The monarchs have lived on the international space station to take part in studies.
- ◆ Science uses the monarchs more than other butterflies in several studies.

Even though the monarch is the most recognized butterfly, you still may not be convinced as to why there has been such a fuss about them or why we need them as pollinators. A good way to hear and see their story, is to watch the videos at <https://www.wildcenter.org/science/all-about-monarchs-2/>.

Migration Has Started



The monarchs that are the farthest from Mexico such as from Canada or the northern states of the US such as Minnesota, Michigan or Maine start migrating as early as August and September with others following in October depending on if the weather has cooled down enough to signal them to leave. As soon as it cools down, the monarchs will begin to fly south. They normally fly very high so you may not see them unless they come down for a break to get food and rest.

The monarch migration is a massive movement of butterflies has been referred to as “one of the most spectacular natural phenomena in the world.” The monarchs are the only butterfly that migrate as far as they do and for as long. The ones that live in Canada, the Eastern and Midwestern states migrate to the Oyamel fir forests of Mexico and the ones that live in the Western states migrate to the coast of California.

There are a few monarchs that migrate to areas in Arizona, northern Florida, and Cuba. Some monarch species in Australia and New Zealand migrate short distances and there are some that do not migrate at all such as in Florida, Central and South American, and the Caribbean. This means that some of them will fly close to 3,000 miles one way if coming from Canada to Mexico.

The annual migration is considered a “threatened phenomenon” by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which means that someday they may not be migrating long distances anymore and stay closer to home.

They don't all leave at the same time but rely on the position of the sun, temperatures dropping, and the shortening of daylight in the area that they live as well as what can be considered electromagnetic cues from the earth. Scientists have discovered that they have internal clocks that are located in their antennae that sends signals to their brain to help them navigate. The monarchs that fly the farthest grow bigger and heavier than others.

For some reason, there is the belief that there is more than just one generation of the monarch that migrates to Mexico or California and then returns to the same place again in Spring. Perhaps it is because there are so many that go. However that myth got started, it is not true. Rather it is the Autumn generation that is genetically built to make the trip as they have larger and stronger wings.

Then after eight months of wintering in the south, they mate on the way back and the females lay eggs along the way. This Autumn generation has fulfilled its mission so they die off as the next generations carry on to repeat the cycle. You can watch a video that tells about the migration at <https://www.wildcenter.org/science/all-about-monarchs-2/>

The number of monarchs that migrate have declined by more than 80 percent over the past two decades. The main reasons for the decrease in the monarch butterfly population are as follows:

- ◆ The agricultural use of glyphosate kills milkweed plants that caterpillars eat
- ◆ Caterpillars also die from airborne herbicides
- ◆ Habitat being destroyed for urban development
- ◆ Climate/global warming forces changes in migration patterns and weather
- ◆ Unnecessary mowing along highways killing off milkweeds/wild flowers
- ◆ The illegal logging in Mexico cause weather changes/lack of wintering trees
- ◆ Increase of monarch diseases, parasites and predators.



How You Can Help



Plant Milkweeds Now

As brought out on page 2, the monarchs need our help to survive and we will be helping ourselves by helping them. One way that you can help the monarchs is to plant milkweeds in your flower garden now. If you plant the perennials now, they may be big enough in the spring to be of help to the female monarchs laying eggs. But what if you live in the city and don't have a garden? You can still help.

According to the Keller Science Action Center, it is becoming recognized that cities as well as the countryside can be helpful to the monarch's survival. This is exceptional news since 4 out of 5 Americans live in cities. For example, Chicago has put forth innovative efforts in order to plant 16 million stems of milkweed throughout the city and anticipate to increase that number to over 38 million in the next few years.



The word is getting out that anyone can help and many people are taking action by growing the plants monarchs need to survive, including milkweed and other native flowers that provide nectar for the butterfly throughout the growing season. They can be planted in home gardens and in natural areas around schools, offices, parks, or anywhere there is a patch of open land—even on inner city patios.

Warning: Milkweed plants are poisonous to animals other than monarchs so do not plant them anywhere that your pet can get to, especially if they like to chew plants. If you grow anywhere that your pets can get to, be sure to put some type of fencing around plants to keep out the pets. The toxicity of the plant is what helps protect the Monarchs from predators as they do not like the taste of the caterpillars or butterflies.

Also, milkweeds get the “milk” in their name from the milky latex that oozes out when a leaf or stem is broken. This “milk” can cause severe eye problems if it gets in an eye from rubbing it after touching the milk. Be certain to wash your hands thoroughly after handling them.

Butterfly Garden in 7 Steps

You can begin a garden in a plot of land like a backyard or add a few plants to a window box or pots on the patio. Growing a garden of any type takes patience and a watchful eye so having a butterfly garden close by to where you can see it out of your window or right outside the door is a good idea.

Pick a sunny area which has some protection from wind like some trees or shrubs. Since butterflies love to soak up the sun, find some big rocks you can place throughout the garden or next to the box or pots for them to land on and rest. Placing something like a bowl or birdbath to keep water in is also a good way to attract butterflies.



You will need standard garden tools, planting soil or extra dirt and mulch. You may want to get an idea of what you want your garden to look like from websites or garden magazines.

The seven steps to making your butterfly garden in the country or city are as follows:

1. Research what type of butterflies come to your area and the nectar-producing flowers they prefer as well as what type of milkweed host plants you will want to plant. One place to look is at <http://www.gardenswithwings.com/> which gives you a list of plants by your zip code.
2. If you're using the land's soil, get it analyzed to see if it's compatible with the plants planned. If the ground's soil isn't satisfactory, obtain supplies to build a raised bed, planter box or enough planting pots to hold the amount of plants or seeds you are planning that can be filled with soil purchased at nursery or garden store.
3. If you're using the land's soil, prepare soil of ground by turning it by raking and adding more fresh soil.
4. Obtain plants from local nursery that have not been treated with pesticides. Planting perennials that will grow back every year are less work. Not all milkweeds are perennials but those that are have a wide variety of different colors. Some will grow best in certain areas. Go to <https://blog.nwf.org/2015/02/twelve-native-milkweeds-for-monarchs/> to find what states they grow in, their growing conditions, how big they will get, and more.
5. If using seeds, choose those you can plant in the spring or fall so they have time to germinate. You can also purchase small plants already starting to grow at a nursery.
6. Planting is the fun part – plant rooted plants in holes just big enough for the roots, cover and pack with dirt or straw mulch to cut down on weeds. Plant seeds according to directions but try to put them in bunches so that the colors will be more easily seen by butterflies. Cover with a layer of dirt as instructed on package.
7. The 4 W's – Watch, Wait, Water, and Weed: Water generously every day or according to the instructions on seed packages. Once the plants start growing, continue to water regularly and pull any weeds as soon as possible. Keep water or wet moist soil exposed for the monarchs to drink.



Kid's Activity Page



Make a Mask or Wind Chimes

Make your own masks. Be creative and come up with designs that look anything like this one. Color and cut the eyes out and tie a string to fasten to your head. Making your own wind chimes is just as easy. You can color or paint, cut out, and then tie a string to the top so you can hang it up and tie sticks you can get at a craft store for the wind chimes.



Sun-catcher Pumpkin or Apple

Materials:

- Cardstock Paper (for drawing the pumpkin or apple)
- Clear Contact Paper, 2 pieces cut to size of pumpkin or apple
- Tissue Paper, orange for pumpkin or red for apple
- Scissors

Directions:

1. Color the pumpkin/apple. They do not need to color the center part.
2. Cut out the pumpkin/apple (outside line).
3. Cut out the center of the apple. (Poke a hole in the center with your scissors, carefully cut along dotted line.)
4. Tape down a piece of contact paper to the back of your pumpkin/apple. The non-sticky side should show through the pumpkin/apple when you look at it from the front.
5. Cut tissue paper in squares and add to as seen in picture.
6. Press down second piece of contact paper over the tissue paper to seal it together, creating a complete window.
7. Trim any contact or tissue paper that sticks out from around the apple.
8. Place sticky side to your window!

Note: Wax paper can definitely be used in place of contact paper but will need to be taped onto window and you will have to add glue to make it sticky. You could deviate from the traditional orange and do colorful colors instead, or light green for a granny smith! Enjoy!

From: <http://learncreatelove.com/tag/suncatcher-craft/>

Use the same process for the butterfly sun-catcher. You can use this shape or a full butterfly shape in whatever colors you want.



Be a Butterfly for Halloween!

Order from Amazon.com



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Butterfly Tips



Things to Avoid to Help the Monarch

Pesticides & Insecticides

There are several pesticides and insecticides used in urban areas to fight mosquitoes and nurseries use some that are dangerous to pollinators so it is important that you check with your nursery before buying their plants.

There are insecticides or neonicotinoids used in garden products to be aware of that are not good for pollinators that you should not buy for your garden. They include ingredients of imidacloprid, clothianidin, thiamethoxam, acetamiprid, and dinotefuran.

You can find a thorough list of what you can plant in your garden in order to help deter that bug that you don't want in your garden by going to <http://afbeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Companion-Planting.pdf>.

GMO Foods

Foods to avoid are any that are genetically engineered known as GMO. The best way to do that when shopping is to not buy any products made with corn, soy, and canola unless they specifically say they are non-GMO with a label that has a monarch butterfly that says NON-GMO Project Verified. To see what the label looks like and to read more on this, go to www.nongmoproject.org.

Organic food is certified to be grown without herbicides. You can avoid GMOs even if on a budget but you need to be aware that almost all processed foods have corn, soy, or canola in them are GMO even if they appear as a different name on the label. It's true that organic food cost more but the more we buy it the more demand there will be for it and the prices will go down. You can get organic food at Farmer's Markets for more reasonable prices than the local supermarket. Check your area for one near you.

If you can do any one of the things mentioned to help the monarchs in this newsletter, you will be of great help to the monarch butterfly and other pollinators. As you enjoy your Autumn activities, think of the monarchs doing their migration and look for them to visit your butterfly garden.

Wishing You Many Butterfly Blessings!

Jessica Dumas
The Butterfly

Connection



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