



Fact Sheet

What can we do to save the Monarch Butterflies?

No Milkweed. No Monarchs.

In 2014, monarch **butterflies made** headline news when the number of these butterflies hibernating in Mexico plunged to its lowest level. The **decline in monarch butterflies has been linked to the disappearance of** milkweed plants across the U.S. Some estimate that the number of milkweed plants has declined by as much as 80 percent.

Why is Milkweed Important?

No milkweed, no monarchs! It's that simple! Milkweed is the main food source for monarch butterflies. Monarch caterpillars need milkweed to grow into butterflies. They also lay eggs on these plants. Their habitat is disappearing, mainly because milkweed populations have been decimated by the use of herbicides **on** soybean, corn and cotton crops. Milkweed, which grows on the edges of corn and soybean fields, can't withstand the herbicides sprayed on these crops. Another reason for the decline of **the** milkweed populations is urbanization.

An Interesting Life Cycle

After hibernating in Mexico, the monarchs begin their journey north in February or March. Most monarchs live for only two to six weeks, but during the long migrations between Mexico and North America, some special migrating butterflies live up **to** several months. These migrations can cover over 2,000 miles each way

What can we do to save the Monarch Butterflies?

Adult monarch butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed plants. Planting milkweed is **also a** great way to help other pollinators, as they provide valuable nectar as a food source for both bees and butterflies.

What is Milkweed and how to grow it.

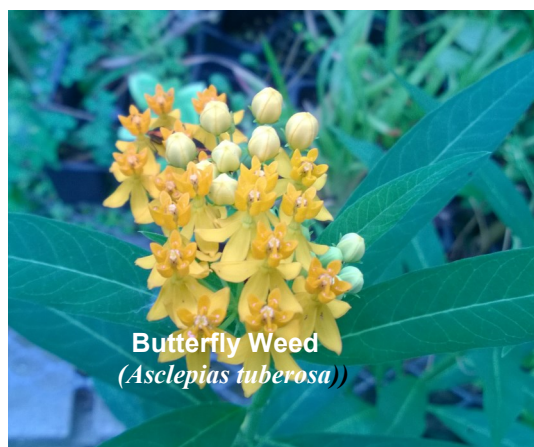
The milkweed, ~~is~~ an American **genus of** herbaceous perennial, dicotyledonous plants, ~~that~~ contains over 140 known species. They are called milkweeds because of their milky sap, which consists of a latex containing alkaloids and several other complex compounds. Milkweed grows nationwide.

The milkweed species commonly offered to the home gardener are: butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), and tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*). Each of these species are worthy of planting in any garden and all entice butterflies to visit.

The goal is to draw monarch females to the garden for egg-laying. **We suggest planting** two species of milkweed: tropical milkweed and swamp milkweed. It would be a wise choice to include tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) in the garden because it has tender leaves that monarch caterpillars love to feed on (and egg-laying females **often choose** for laying **their** eggs on). Tropical milkweed is easy to grow and matures quickly under the long days of summer. **It is perennial in our area.**

Butterfly weed can be grown from seeds. Keep butterfly weed **plant** well-watered through its first season; after that it will be fine pretty much left on its own. Butterfly weed doesn't require fertilization. A topdressing of compost or composted manure once per year around the plant is sufficient. Swamp milkweed needs more water, plant it in a wet area.

When growing milkweed avoid pesticides and herbicides.



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