

You Can Help the Monarch and Other Butterflies

IMPORTANT: Butterflies are insects. Don't use pesticides if you want butterflies. (And pesticides are dangerous for kids, pets, and wildlife, too!)

Some milkweeds for monarchs

Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*): medium to wet soil; sun to part shade; 2-4 ft; pink flowers

Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*): medium to dry well-drained soil; sun to part sun; 1-3 ft; orange

Host plants for other butterflies

Host plants are the caterpillar food plants. You can't have butterflies without some chewed leaves. That's what butterfly larvae eat! The plants will recover.

Learn to recognize butterfly caterpillars. The Stokes book (at right) has good photos of each kind.

Host plants for some butterflies found in CNY:

Black swallowtail – zizia, dill, parsley, carrot, fennel

Tiger swallowtail – wild black cherry, spicebush, ash, birch, willow, red maple

American Lady – pussytoes, pearly everlasting, ironweed, borage

Red Admiral - nettles

Baltimore checkerspot – white turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)

Question mark – nettles, hops, hackberry, elm

Fritillaries – violets

Mourning cloak – willow, elm, poplar, birch

Spring azure – dogwood, NJ tea, viburnum, sumac

Puddling

Some butterflies, such as tiger swallowtails, gather in groups on wet sand or mud to get minerals. You can create a puddling area by placing a shallow pan in the soil and filling it with coarse sand mixed with salt: add ½ - ¾ cup table salt to 1 gallon of sand. Moisten it each morning.

Nectar plants

Important: Native plants are best for butterflies!

The size of the flower doesn't matter – even small flowers can be loaded with nectar. Avoid hybrid plants with many petals. They're attractive to humans, but they often don't have accessible nectar.

They must land to get the nectar, so they like plants that have clusters of short tubular flowers or flowers with large, flat petals. Butterflies generally prefer plants with pink, red, purple, yellow, or orange flowers. Plant a large patch of a single color, or closely related colors. And plant lots of patches!

Some suggestions:

Joe-pye weed (*Eupatorium spp.*)

Milkweeds (*Asclepias spp.*)

Gayfeather, blazing star (*Liatris spp.*)

Goldenrods (*Solidago spp.*) (They do NOT cause hayfever!)

Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

New England asters (*Aster spp.*)

Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), bergamot (*M. fistulosa*)

Black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia spp.*)

New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*)

Sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)

New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*)

Sunflowers (*Helianthus*)

Violets (*Viola spp.*)

Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

(NOTE: Buddleia “Butterfly bush” is NOT on the list!)

Other food sources

* Sap from wounded trees

* Rotting fruit (bananas, peaches, melons, etc.) or from shrubs with excess berries that rot on ground

* Even urine, dung, bird droppings!

Overwintering sites

Depending on the butterfly, they may overwinter as eggs, larvae, pupae, or adults. Leave some logs, leaf litter, debris etc. around your yard. Don't rake them up in the spring!

Resources

Tallamy, Doug *Bringing Nature Home*

Stokes, Donald & Lillian Stokes *Butterfly Book*

(BUT this book recommends many non-natives or even invasives! Check their plant suggestions carefully.)

Rea, Ba et.al. *Milkweed, Monarchs and More*

Summers, Carolyn *Designing Gardens with Flora of the American East*

Websites:

University of Minnesota Monarch Lab projects:

www.monarchlab.umn.edu - how to rear butterflies inside

Monarch Larva Monitoring Project - citizen science

Xerces - Free downloads: *Pollinator Friendly Parks* (inc. butterflies in home garden) at www.xerces.org/guidelines/;

Butterfly Gardening at www.xerces.org/fact-sheets

Pollinator Partnership: Excellent free download for our region at www.pollinator.org/guides.htm

Journey North – www.journeynorth.org - for monarchs

Donate to help monarchs

Monarch Watch: www.monarchwatch.org/donate

Monarch Butterfly Fund: Conserving the Migration:
www.monarchbutterflyfund.org