

Conservation Forum - For and by members of PGC -

Save the Monarch Butterfly

The monarch butterfly is one of the most recognizable species of wildlife in all of America. They undertake one of the world's most remarkable and fascinating migrations, traveling thousands of miles over many generations from Mexico, across the United States, to Canada. Go to <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/monarch.html> to follow the monarch migration week- by-week.

North American monarch butterflies are in trouble. Due to threats such as shifting land management practices, we have lost much milkweed from the landscape. This is having a devastating impact on their populations and the migration phenomenon. Since the 1996 count of some 1 billion, their numbers have declined by approximately 90%. Milkweed habitats are needed for monarchs to lay their eggs and for their caterpillars to eat. Female monarch butterflies only lay their eggs on milkweed. Planting milkweed is a great way to help other pollinators too, as milkweed provides nectar resources to a diverse suite of bees and butterflies.

Milkweed Species for our area:

- Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) Well drained soils.
- Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) Damp, marshy areas.
- Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) Well drained soils.
- Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*) Prairies and open areas.
- Poke Milkweed (*Asclepias exaltata*) Woodland areas



The state of Monarchs reflects the health of the American landscape and its pollinators. Monarch declines are symptomatic of environmental problems that also pose risks to food production, the spectacular natural places that help define our national identity, and our own health. Conserving and connecting habitat for monarchs will benefit many other plants and animals, including critical insect and avian pollinators, and future generations of Americans. Unless we act now to help the Monarch, this amazing butterfly could disappear in our lifetime.

We can save the Monarch, but it will take a concerted national effort.

Every backyard can become an oasis for monarchs and other pollinators—even in cities. Schools, youth and community groups, businesses, and state and local governments can engage in planting **native** milkweed (not tropical milkweed) and protecting monarch habitat along roadsides, rights of way, and other public and private lands. By enlisting a broad group of partners, from school children to CEOs, we will build a connected conservation constituency. Practicing sustainable gardening with the use of native plants, water conservation, and not using pesticides or herbicides ensures wildlife abundance.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has launched a major new campaign aimed at saving the declining monarch butterfly. The Service signed a cooperative agreement with the National Wildlife Federation, announced a major new funding initiative with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and pledged an additional \$2 million in immediate funding for on-the-ground conservation projects around the country. The USFWS will be supporting over 750 schoolyard habitats and pollinator gardens from CA to the Corn Belt. For more information with details, photos and how you can get involved, visit www.fws.gov/savethemonarchhttp://www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/monarch.html

The above information was taken from MonarchJointVenture.org and The National Gardener.

Sandy Menke, Conservation Chair