

Get Involved » Create Habitat for Monarchs

Monarchs cannot survive without milkweed; their caterpillars only eat milkweed plants (*Asclepias* spp.), and monarch butterflies need milkweed to lay their eggs. With shifting land management practices, we have lost much milkweed from the landscape.

Please plant milkweed to support monarch populations, and their incredible migration! Planting milkweed is a great way to help other pollinators too, as they provide valuable nectar resources to a diverse suite of bees and butterflies. For a brief how-to flyer on planting and gardening, download MJV's *Gardening for Monarchs* or the Wild Ones "Wild for Monarchs" brochure.

A mix of native flowers with different bloom times, including some overlap in flowering, to ensure a stable food source for butterflies. A combination of early, middle and late blooming species will fuel butterfly breeding and migration.

Native milkweed to provide food for monarch caterpillars.

Minimal, well-timed management that limits impacts to all pollinators, including butterflies, while eliminating woody species as needed. Preferably, mowing should be limited to times when plants have died back or are dormant. Mowing at any time (even in the winter) kills insects. In the summer, some insects can't get away from the mower, especially eggs and caterpillars. In the winter insects may be dormant in leaf litter or plant stems. Mowing in patches ensures that pollinators can recolonize the mowed areas.

Avoidance of insecticides.

If needed, minimal, well-timed insecticide applications. If chemicals must be used, choose the least toxic alternative, and apply them early and late in the day, when fewer pollinators are present. Please note that chemicals will kill monarch larvae, if they are present. Herbicides, if required, should be applied with targeted spot treatments instead of a broadcast method. Whenever possible, mechanical removal of shrubs should be used in combination with herbicides to maintain butterfly habitat.

Invasive plant species control by targeted or mechanical means. Invasive plants can compete with native species for resources. Often, invasives win, because they do not have natural enemies in their new environment to keep their numbers in check. Many invasive plants also secrete chemicals into the soil that deter native plants from growing in the area.

Roadways and utility corridors are highly visible areas. Consider adding a sign or informational brochures in highly frequented areas, such as rest stops, to educate the public about your monarch conservation efforts.

For more information on management areas, please visit the Xerces Society's *Pollinators and Roadsides: Managing Roadsides for Bees and Butterflies*.

Agricultural Areas

Agricultural fields used to be an important source of milkweed for monarch caterpillars. Milkweed has historically grown alongside crop plants, and provided abundant food for monarch

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Monarchs cannot survive without milkweed. Their caterpillars only eat milkweed plants. As adults, they need milkweed to lay their eggs. *With planting and management practices, we can help milkweed from the landscape.*

There are many ways to support monarch populations and their incredible migration. The most important is a good way to help other pollinators too as they provide valuable ecosystem services. Milkweed is a great way to do this. For a brief overview of our planting and gardening, visit www.butterflyconservation.org for more information on the "Wild Ones" project.

A mix of native flowers with different bloom times, including some opening in the winter, ensures a stable food source for butterflies. A combination of early, middle and late blooming plants is best. *Native milkweed to provide food for monarch caterpillars.*

Minimal, well-timed management that limits impacts to all pollinators, including monarchs, while eliminating woody species is needed. *Practically, mowing should be limited to times when plants have died back or are dormant. Mowing at any time over in the winter kills insects. In the summer, some insects can't get away from the mower, especially eggs and caterpillars. In the winter, insects may be dormant in leaf litter or plant stems, mowing in patches causes that pollinators can recolonize the mowed areas.*

Avoidance of insecticides. *If needed, minimal, well-timed insecticide applications. If insecticide must be used, choose the least toxic alternative and apply them early and late in the day, when fewer pollinators are present. Please note that herbicides will kill monarch larvae if they are present. If herbicides are needed, they should be applied with targeted spot treatments instead of a broadcast method. However, possible mechanical removal of shrubs should be used in combination with herbicides to maintain healthy habitat.*

Planting native species for monarchs. *Native species for monarchs. Other species are not native to the area and can be invasive. Planting native species helps monarch caterpillars find their new environment to keep their numbers in check. Many invasive plants also secrete chemicals into the soil that harm native plants from growing in the area.*

For more information on management needs, please visit the Monarch Society's Pollinators and Habitat Areas. *For more information on management needs, please visit the Monarch Society's Pollinators and Habitat Areas. Consider adding a sign or informational brochure in highly frequented areas, such as rest stops, to educate the public about your monarch conservation efforts.*

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Agricultural fields need to be an important source of milkweed for monarch caterpillars. *Agricultural fields need to be an important source of milkweed for monarch caterpillars. Milkweed has historically grown alongside crop plants and provided abundant food for monarch*

caterpillars. With the introduction of herbicide tolerant crops, management shifted from a till-based approach to the widespread use of herbicides. This practice has diminished much of the milkweed growing in agricultural areas, since milkweed can survive some tilling, but cannot survive herbicides.

Farmers have an important role to play in the conservation of monarch butterflies. Farms across the continent are adopting pollinator friendly practices.

Key components of agricultural habitat:

Native flowers planted in fallow fields, hedgerows, and farm field margins to provide food for butterflies. A combination of early, middle and late blooming species, with overlap in flowering times, will fuel butterfly breeding and migration.

Native milkweed planted in unused portions of the site to provide food for caterpillars.

Use of low till and no till farming techniques to allow more milkweed to grow alongside crops.

Avoidance of pesticides.

If needed, use minimal, well-timed herbicide applications. If chemicals must be used, choose the least toxic alternative, and apply them early and late in the day, when fewer butterflies are present. Please note that chemicals will kill monarch larvae. Herbicides, if required, should be applied with targeted spot treatments instead of a broadcast method. Whenever possible, mechanical removal of shrubs should be used in combination with herbicides to maintain butterfly habitat.

For additional information on pollinator friendly farming, please refer to *Farming for Bees: Guidelines for Providing Native Bee Habitat on Farms* created by the Xerces Society.

Natural and Restored Areas

Natural areas include nature preserves, parks, or areas not actively being used for another purpose. Restored areas are lands that have been specifically replanted and re-purposed for conservation.

Natural areas may also be located in high traffic areas. Trail margins in prairie areas, campsites, and picnic areas present opportunities to enhance butterfly breeding and migratory habitat. Natural areas can be enhanced for monarchs using a few simple ideas.

Key components of natural/restored habitat:

A mix of native flowers with different bloom times, including some overlap in flowering, to ensure a stable food source for butterflies. A combination of early, middle and late blooming species will fuel butterfly breeding and migration.

Native milkweed to provide food for monarch caterpillars.

Minimal management, including the avoidance of mowing until butterflies have migrated from the area. It is important to stress that mowing kills insects any time of the year. Mowing in patches ensures that pollinators always have access to undisturbed patches of habitat, and that surviving insects can recolonize the mowed area.

Avoidance of pesticides; avoid herbicides, except for targeted invasive species control.

competition. With the introduction of herbicide tolerant crop management shifted from a
weed-based approach to the widespread use of herbicides. This practice has diminished much of the
milkweed growing in agricultural areas, since milkweed can only survive in areas with low
herbicide levels.

Landowners have an important role to play in the conservation of monarch butterflies. Farm
practices that are more monarch friendly are encouraged.

Key components of agricultural habitat

Native flowers planted in fallow fields, along roadsides and farm field margins to provide
butterflies. A combination of early, middle and late blooming species, including milkweed,
will best butterfly breeding and migration.

Native milkweed planted in unused portions of the site to provide food for caterpillars.
Avoidance of pesticides, especially herbicides, in areas where milkweed is growing.

Avoidance of pesticides, especially herbicides, in areas where milkweed is growing.
If needed, use minimal, well-timed herbicide applications. If chemicals must be used, choose
the least toxic alternative, and apply them early and late in the day when lower butterfly
presence. Please note that chemicals will kill monarch larvae. Herbicides, if required, should be
applied with targeted spot treatments instead of a broadcast method. Whenever possible,
mechanical removal of weeds should be used in combination with herbicides to maintain
butterfly habitat.

For additional information on pollinator friendly farming, please refer to Farming for Bees
Guidelines for Providing Native Bee Habitat on Farms created by the Xerces Society
for Invertebrate Conservation.

Native areas include natural preserves, parks, or areas not actively being used for another
purpose. Restored areas are lands that have been specifically replanted and re-purposed for
butterfly habitat.

Native areas may also include high traffic areas, field margins or other areas where
and picnic areas present opportunities to enhance butterfly breeding and migration habitat.
Native areas can be enhanced for monarchs using a few simple ideas.

Key components of natural restored habitat

A mix of native flowers with different bloom times, including some overlap in flowering to
ensure a stable food source for butterflies. A combination of early, middle and late blooming
species will best butterfly breeding and migration.

Native milkweed to provide food for monarch caterpillars.
Minimal management, including the avoidance of mowing and pesticides have migrated from
the area. It is important to ensure that mowing kills insects way late in the year. Mowing in
patches ensures that pollinators always have access to undisturbed patches of habitat, and that
migrating insects can recolonize the mowed areas.
Avoidance of pesticides, avoid herbicides, except for targeted invasive species control.