

# Monarch Butterflies

## Plant Lists

## Plant Recommendations for Monarch Butterflies

**Midwest:** *Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan,  
Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin*

NRCS is working with agricultural producers to combat the decline of monarch butterflies by planting milkweed and other nectar-rich wildflowers on private lands. The agency collaborated with the Xerces Society to reach out to biologists across the country to recommend the best plant species for conservation practices based on literature and personal observations. Biologists were represented from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Prairie Haven, Zumbro Valley Audubon, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Ernst Conservation Seeds, Great River Greening and others.

For the monarch-friendly conservation plantings the NRCS is helping landowners to implement, agency biologists recommend that 50 to 75 percent of plants come from this list with at least 3 percent of the plantings consisting of milkweed species. Milkweed is the only larval food source for the monarch

butterfly. In the Midwest, NRCS recommends two-thirds of milkweed be **common milkweed** (*Asclepias syriaca*). Common milkweed is native to this region and is readily established there. The remaining third of the milkweed seeds should be **butterfly milkweed** (*Asclepias tuberosa*) on sandy, well drained soils or **swamp milkweed** (*Asclepias incarnata*) on richer, less well drained soils. Both of these species are available in quantities large enough to be used in conservation plantings.

Plant species which were reported to be of superlative use to the monarch were rated as "Very High" value, as were plants mentioned in multiple sources as providing nectar to monarchs. Other plant species which were also cited as attractive to monarchs but with less frequency were given the rating of "High" value.

Midwest Monarch Region - MO, IA, MN, WI, IL, MI, IN, OH				Bloom (x) Monarch Presence (orange)									Commercially available	
Monarch Value	Species name	Common name	Growth Habit	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Seeds	Live Plants
Very High	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	Eastern purple	forb/herb		x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Very High	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Butterfly weed	forb/herb			x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Very High	<i>Asclepias verticillata</i>	Whorled milkweed	forb/herb			x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Very High	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Wild bergamot	forb/herb,			x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Very High	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	Swamp milkweed	forb/herb				x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Very High	<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Common buttonbush	shrub, tree				x	x	x	x			x	x
Very High	<i>Cirsium discolor</i>	Field thistle	forb/herb				x	x	x	x			x	x
Very High	<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	Common milkweed	forb/herb				x	x	x				x	x
Very High	<i>Oligoneuron rigidum</i> var. <i>rigidum</i>	Stiff goldenrod	forb/herb					x	x	x	x		x	x
Very High	<i>Eupatorium altissimum</i>	Tall thoroughwort	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
Very High	<i>Helianthus grosseserratus</i>	Sawtooth sunflower	forb/herb						x	x	x	x	x	x
Very High	<i>Eutrochium maculatum</i>	Spotted joe pye weed	forb/herb						x	x	x		x	x
Very High	<i>Symphotrichum novae-angliae</i>	New England aster	forb/herb						x	x	x		x	x
Very High	<i>Liatris aspera</i>	Tall blazing star	forb/herb						x	x			x	x
Very High	<i>Liatris ligulistylis</i>	Rocky Mountain blazing	forb/herb						x	x			x	x
Very High	<i>Solidago speciosa</i>	Showy goldenrod	forb/herb						x	x			x	x
Very High	<i>Liatris cylindracea</i>	Ontario blazing star	forb/herb						x				x	x
Very High	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Common sunflower	forb/herb					x	x	x	x		x	
Very High	<i>Bidens aristosa</i>	Bearded beggarticks	forb/herb					x	x				x	
High	<i>Mertensia virginica</i>	Virginia bluebells	forb/herb	x	x	x	x						x	x
High	<i>Phlox divaricata</i>	Wild blue phlox	forb/herb	x	x	x							x	x
High	<i>Delphinium tricorne</i>	Dwarf larkspur	forb/herb		x	x							x	x
High	<i>Dicentra cucullaria</i>	Dutchman's breeches	forb/herb		x	x							x	x
High	<i>Monarda punctata</i>	Spotted beebalm	forb/herb,		x	x	x	x	x				x	x
High	<i>Phlox glaberrima</i>	Smooth phlox	forb/herb		x	x	x						x	x
High	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	Black locust	tree		x	x	x						x	x
High	<i>Asclepias speciosa</i>	Showy milkweed	forb/herb			x	x	x	x	x			x	x

Note on the background shading: white – very high value and readily available as both seeds and plants  
light green – very high value and less available  
medium green – high value and readily available as both seeds and plants  
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High	<i>Blephilia hirsuta</i>	Hairy pagoda-plant	forb/herb			x	x	x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Wild bergamot	forb/herb,			x	x	x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Blephilia ciliata</i>	Downy pagoda-plant	forb/herb			x	x	x	x				x	x
High	<i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>	Rattlesnake master	forb/herb			x	x	x	x				x	x
High	<i>Asclepias purpurascens</i>	Purple milkweed	forb/herb			x	x	x					x	x
High	<i>Dalea candida</i>	White prairie clover	forb/herb,			x	x	x					x	x
High	<i>Echinacea pallida</i>	Pale purple coneflower	forb/herb			x	x	x					x	x
High	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Blackeyed Susan	forb/herb				x	x	x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Solidago nemoralis</i>	Gray goldenrod	forb/herb				x	x	x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>	Common boneset	forb/herb				x	x	x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Cirsium discolor</i>	Field thistle	forb/herb				x	x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i>	Smooth oxeye	forb/herb				x	x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Asclepias sullivantii</i>	Prairie milkweed	forb/herb				x	x	x				x	x
High	<i>Symphyotrichum cordifolium</i>	Common blue wood	forb/herb				x	x	x				x	x
High	<i>Amorpha canescens</i>	Leadplant	shrub, subshrub				x	x					x	x
High	<i>Conoclinium coelestinum</i>	Blue mistflower	forb/herb					x	x	x	x	x	x	x
High	<i>Boltonia asteroides</i>	White doll's daisy	forb/herb					x	x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Brickellia eupatorioides</i> var. <i>eupatorioid</i>	False boneset	forb/herb,					x	x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>	Great blue lobelia	forb/herb					x	x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Doellingeria umbellata</i> var. <i>umbellata</i>	Parasol whitetop	forb/herb					x	x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Agastache nepetoides</i>	Yellow giant hyssop	forb/herb,					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Coreopsis tripteris</i>	Tall tickseed	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Eutrochium purpureum</i>	Sweetscented joe pye	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Helianthus pauciflorus</i>	Stiff sunflower	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Helianthus strumosus</i>	Paleleaf woodland	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Liatris spicata</i>	Dense blazing star	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Silphium integrifolium</i>	Wholeleaf rosinweed	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Silphium laciniatum</i>	Compassplant	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Silphium perfoliatum</i>	Cup plant	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x

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Monarch Value	Species name	Common name	Growth Habit	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Seeds	Live Plants
High	<i>Sium suave</i>	Hemlock waterparsnip	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Verbena stricta</i>	Hoary verbena	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Vernonia fasciculata</i>	Prairie ironweed	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>	Culver's root	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Eutrochium purpureum</i>	Sweetscented joe pye	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	x
High	<i>Coreopsis palmata</i>	Stiff tickseed	forb/herb					x	x				x	x
High	<i>Helianthus grosseserratus</i>	Sawtooth sunflower	forb/herb						x	x	x	x	x	x
High	<i>Helianthus maximiliani</i>	Maximilian sunflower	forb/herb						x	x	x	x	x	x
High	<i>Liatris pycnostachya</i>	Prairie blazing star	forb/herb						x	x	x	x	x	x
High	<i>Physostegia virginiana</i>	Obedient plant	forb/herb						x	x	x	x	x	x
High	<i>Helianthus tuberosus</i>	Jerusalem artichoke	forb/herb						x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Liatris punctata</i>	Dotted blazing star	forb/herb						x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Oligoneuron rigidum</i>	Stiff goldenrod	forb/herb						x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Symphotrichum laeve</i> var. <i>laeve</i>	Smooth aster	forb/herb						x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Symphotrichum novae-angliae</i>	New England aster	forb/herb						x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Symphotrichum oolentangiense</i> var. <i>oolentanqiense</i>	Skyblue aster	forb/herb, subshrub						x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Symphotrichum pilosum</i> var. <i>pilosum</i>	Hairy white oldfield aster	forb/herb						x	x	x		x	x
High	<i>Liatris scariosa</i>	Devil's bite	forb/herb						x	x			x	x
High	<i>Liatris cylindracea</i>	Ontario blazing star	forb/herb						x				x	x
High	<i>Apocynum cannabinum</i>	Indianhemp	forb/herb			x	x	x	x				x	
High	<i>Echinacea angustifolia</i>	Blacksamson echinacea	forb/herb			x	x	x					x	
High	<i>Onosmodium bejariense</i> var. <i>occidental</i>	Western marbleseed	forb/herb				x	x					x	
High	<i>Cirsium muticum</i>	Swamp thistle	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	
High	<i>Helianthus giganteus</i>	Giant sunflower	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	
High	<i>Lilium superbum</i>	Turk's-cap lily	forb/herb					x	x	x			x	
High	<i>Solidago canadensis</i>	Canada goldenrod	forb/herb							x	x	x	x	
High	<i>Prunus serotina</i>	Black cherry	shrub, tree	x	x	x	x							x
High	<i>Amsonia tabernaemontana</i>	Eastern bluestar	forb/herb	x	x	x								x

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Monarch Value	Species name	Common name	Growth Habit	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Seeds	Live Plants
High	<i>Prunus americana</i>	American plum	shrub, tree		x	x								x
High	<i>Krigia biflora</i> var. <i>biflora</i>	Twoflower	forb/herb			x	x	x	x					x
High	<i>Crataegus crus-galli</i>	Cockspur hawthorn	shrub, tree			x	x							x
High	<i>Malus coronaria</i>	Sweet crab apple	shrub, tree			x	x							x
High	<i>Phlox paniculata</i>	Fall phlox	forb/herb				x	x	x					x
High	<i>Eutrochium fistulosum</i>	Trumpetweed	forb/herb					x	x	x				x
High	<i>Vernonia baldwinii</i>	Baldwin's ironweed	forb/herb					x	x	x	x	x		x

Unavailable/Hard to Find				Bloom Time (x), Monarch Presence (orange)								Commercially available		
High	<i>Lithospermum canescens</i>	Hoary puccoon	forb/herb		x	x	x						x	
High	<i>Chamaedaphne calyculata</i>	Leatherleaf	shrub		x	x								
High	<i>Ledum groenlandicum</i>	Bog Labrador tea	shrub			x	x	x	x					
High	<i>Asclepias ovalifolia</i>	Oval-leaf milkweed	forb/herb			x	x	x						
High	<i>Crataegus chrysocarpa</i>	Fireberry hawthorn	shrub, tree			x	x							
High	<i>Kalmia polifolia</i>	Bog laurel	shrub			x	x							
High	<i>Rubus flagellaris</i>	Northern dewberry	subshrub			x	x							
High	<i>Bidens laevis</i>	Smooth beggartick	forb/herb				x	x	x	x	x			
High	<i>Cirsium flodmanii</i>	Flodman's thistle	forb/herb				x	x	x	x				
High	<i>Helianthus x laetiflorus</i>	cheerful sunflower	forb/herb						x	x				

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## Cover Photo:

Courtesy of Mace Vaughan, The Xerces Society

## References:

- Holm, H. 2013. Nectar plants for monarch butterflies. Available online at <http://www.beautifulwildlifegarden.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/H-Holm-Nectar-Plants-for-Monarchs.jpg>, last accessed 18 May 2015.
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