

See Your Pollinator Garden Grow

One of the best ways you can help monarch butterflies and other pollinators is to plant a pollinator garden – in your yard, behind your school or church, on your business property or even in a pot for your front steps. A simple, native flower garden helps pollinators stay healthy – and it's pretty.

In addition to nectar from flowers, monarch butterflies need milkweed to survive. So if your milkweed leaves have been chomped, don't worry. The monarchs have been around!

Get Started

Research what varieties of milkweed and wildflowers are native to your area. Here's a great website to launch your research: <http://www.wildflower.org/>

What you'll need

- A yard, raised bed or some flower pots
- Garden tools to break the soil or build a raised bed
- Extra dirt and mulch
- Native milkweed and nectar plants

Seven easy steps

1. **Choose your location:** Gardens should be planted in sunny spots and protected from the wind.
2. **Look at your soil:** Break ground to see the consistency of the soil in your yard. Soil may influence the kinds of plants you can grow or may require special considerations. If your soil type doesn't match the plants you'd like to plant, consider building a raised bed or using flower pots.
3. **Prep your soil:** If you're planting in your yard, remove the lawn and current plant cover and rake the soil. Additional dirt can help and is necessary for raised beds and flower pots.
4. **Choose your plants:** Buy native and local plants and milkweed. Native plants are ideal because they require less maintenance and tend to be heartier.
 - Choose plants that have not been treated with pesticides, insecticides or neonicotinoids.
 - Plant perennials to ensure your plants come back each year and don't require a lot of maintenance.
 - Choose a diversity of plants that bloom throughout the seasons to ensure pollinators benefit in the spring, summer and fall. This will also ensure that your garden is bright and colorful for months!
5. **Choosing seeds or small plants:** Small plants that have already started growing in a nursery are simple to plant and handle in a small space. If you'd like to use seeds, plan to plant in spring or fall, giving the seeds time to germinate. Seeds can also be best if you are planting a very large garden because they are less costly. Water your seeds even before you see plants.
6. **Plant your flowers and milkweed:** For small plants, dig holes just big enough for the root system. Cover the roots with dirt and reinforce with dirt or straw mulch to reduce

weed growth. For seeding, spread seeds across the freshly prepared garden and cover them with dirt. Consider adding some flat rocks so butterflies can bask in the sun,

7. **Wait, watch, water and weed:** It may take some time, but you will eventually see butterflies and other pollinators enjoying your garden. Weed and water your garden to keep it healthy.

Help track monarch movements, milkweed growth and monarch life stages by reporting your sightings at <http://journeynorth.org/monarch/>. For more information, go online to the Monarch Joint Venture: <http://www.monarchjointventure.org/get-involved/create-habitat-for-monarchs/>

Milkweed caption:

Milkweed is not a weed. These beautiful wildflowers are the only source of food for monarch caterpillars. Plant milkweed that is native to your area to attract all pollinators. Photo by Joanna Gilkeson/USFWS

Pollinators caption:

Native wildflower gardens add color to your garden and help bumblebees and butterflies. This purple coneflower attracted both bumblebees and a crab spider. Photo by Jim Hudgins/USFWS