

Middle Elevation Arizona Monarch Waystations & Butterfly Gardens

Southwest Monarch Study



Whether you have a small garden in the city or acres in nearby surrounding areas, you can draw butterflies to your yard to enjoy. While the mid-elevation in Arizona creates unique challenges, you can still enjoy the ephemeral beauty of these graceful visitors. In a world of vanishing habitats, butterflies will throng to your yard if you provide four basic requirements: nectar plants, host plants, a tree or large shrub for protection from the heat of the day or to spend the night and an occasional water source for "puddling." In Arizona even monarchs will seek a water source with our dry climate. We've created a list of favorites to fast start your successful garden.

Host Plants

Host plants, also called larval plants, are annuals or perennials where butterflies lay their eggs. As the tiny caterpillars hatch from the eggs they will consume the leaves and often the flowers as food. While hungry caterpillars can quickly defoliate a plant, new leaves quickly grow afterwards. You can enjoy watching the entire life span of butterflies in your yard by including host plants. More butterflies will linger in your yard looking for a mate or to find just the right place to lay their eggs. To qualify as a registered Monarch Waystation through Monarch Watch, plant at least ten milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.) and include other host plants to draw a variety of other butterflies to your garden. Mass plantings are essential and more noticeable and attractive to butterflies.

MILKWEEDS – MONARCH AND QUEEN BUTTERFLIES			
Host Plant	Botanical Name	Native?	Growing Needs
Antelope Horns or Spider Milkweed	<i>Asclepias asperula</i>	Yes	Full sun, low water
Horsetail Milkweed	<i>Asclepias subverticillata</i>	Yes	Full sun; low water but prefers ditches with more
Butterflyweed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Yes	Full sun but will thrive with some shade; meadows
Showy Milkweed	<i>Asclepias speciosa</i>	Yes	Full sun; thrives mainly in higher locations

SAMPLE OF OTHER HOST PLANTS – START WITH A FEW FAVORITES, THEN ADD MORE EACH YEAR.	
Butterfly	Host Plant
Two-tailed Swallowtail	AZ Rosewood, Chokecherry
Cabbage White	Nasturtium, Cabbage
Sleepy Orange	Senna
Dainty Sulphur	Dyssodia, Marigolds
Gray Hairstreak	Mallows, legumes
Fatal Metalmark	Virgin's bower, Seepwillow
Variegated Fritillary	Violets
Fulvia Checkerspot	Indian Paintbrush
Mourning Cloak	Willows, Cottonwoods
Painted Lady	Hollyhocks, Mallows
Arizona Sister	Oak Trees
Skippers	Grasses



Monarch laying eggs on *Asclepias subverticillata*

Nectar Plants

All butterflies need nectar to sustain their adult life, but not all flowers are created equal. While monarchs and other butterflies may visit in the spring, late summer and fall are the premier seasons. For a wide variety of butterfly visitors, make sure there are flowering plants in your garden throughout the entire season. Clusters of several plants are most effective and visible to flying butterflies. Here is a sample of nectar favorites in addition to milkweeds – always a nectar favorite. Some are native plants and shrubs that may be common in your area. Others are garden specialties. We always encourage growing native plants when possible to flourish in our weather extremes. These nectar plants are best known to attract monarchs and other butterfly species.

Common Name	Botanical Name
Common Sunflower	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>
Tithonia	<i>Tithonia</i> spp.
Rabbitbrush	<i>Chrysothamnus nauseosus</i>
Goldenrod	<i>Solidago</i> spp.
Zinnias	<i>Zinnia</i> spp.
Cosmos	<i>Cosmos</i> spp.
Asters	<i>Aster</i> spp.
Coreopsis	<i>Coreopsis</i> spp.
Western Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
Verbena	<i>Verbena gooddingii</i>
Threadleaf ragwort	<i>Senecio flaccidus</i> var. <i>flaccidus</i>
MacDougal verbena	<i>Verbena macdougalii</i>
Mints	<i>Mentha</i> spp.
Purple Coneflowers	<i>Echinacea</i> spp.
Thistles (Native)	<i>Cirsium</i> spp.
Smooth Beggartick	<i>Bidens laevis</i>
Blue mistflower	<i>Conoclinium coelestinum</i>
Butterflybush	<i>Buddleja</i> spp.
Common Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>



Monarch butterfly feeding on Butterflyweed, *Asclepias tuberosa*

Important Note Regarding Pesticides

Many plant nurseries or their growers use systemic or topical pesticides on their plants to prevent insect damage on leaves. Remember that butterflies are insects too, and their caterpillars will not survive if they chew a treated leaf. Always ask your nursery if your plant has been treated with systemic or topical sprays.

Do not use any pesticides or insecticides. Even nearby spraying can drift onto your visiting butterflies' favorite plants. Many "natural" insecticides also kill larvae. Instead, incorporate a variety of host and nectar plants to help keep pest levels down and allow the populations of natural predators to increase to reduce unwanted pests.

References

- Southwest Monarch Study Waystations <https://www.swmonarchs.org/waystations.php>
- Morris, Gail M., Christopher Kline, and Scott M. Morris. "Status of *Danaus plexippus* Population in Arizona." *The Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society* 69, no. 2 (2015): 91-107.
- Top Ten Key Findings of Status of *Danaus plexippus* in Arizona. (Link: <https://www.swmonarchs.org> Home Page)
- The Xerces Society <http://xerces.org/monarch-nectar-plant-guide-southwest>
- Monarch Watch Waystation Program <https://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations>
- North American Butterfly Association <http://nababutterfly.com/basics-of-butterfly-gardening>

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