

OC VIEW

CAI - ORANGE COUNTY REGIONAL CHAPTER MEMBER MAGAZINE



WHAT'S ALL THE BUZZ
ABOUT HONEY BEES

BUTTERFLY GARDENING
FOR HOAs

THE LIFE
OF PIPES



BUTTERFLY GARDENING FOR HOAs

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Why is it important for HOAs and community landscapers to know about the monarch butterfly life cycle and habitat? HOA gardens can be easy locations to add natural beauty helping to save monarch butterflies from extinction right now in 2021.

Monarch butterflies in the western United States fell to quasi-extinction levels in 2020. Monarch butterflies have bred and graced southern California every April through October for hundreds of thousands of years. They are programmed to migrate up to central coast California, from Santa Barbara to Santa Cruz, in early November and hang in large bunches (roost), overwintering (semi-hibernating) thru February. Every Thanksgiving, since 1935, there has been a count of how many monarchs were overwintering in approximately 400 roosting sites across Central California. The extreme decline is described here:

- 20 years ago, the count was 2.5 to 4 million monarchs
- 5 years ago, the count was 150,000 monarchs
- 2 years ago, the count was 30,000 monarchs
- 2020 count was under 2,000

It appears that our western monarchs are either dying or staying local and continuing to breed in small numbers in the San Francisco Bay area and Southern California. Are there enough to save the species? Is it possible to preserve their migration? No one knows the answer to these questions yet. However, every prominent monarch advocacy and research organization (see list at the end of the article) agrees we have one option to help save them – plant large amounts of milkweed and nectar plants throughout California to support monarch populations and their incredible migration!

Monarchs cannot survive without milkweed; it is the host plant for monarch caterpillars which means milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.) is all they eat. Female monarch butterflies require

milkweed to lay their eggs on. We have lost vast amounts of milkweed across the country and in southern California due to urban landscaping and agricultural land management. In addition, monarch butterflies, bees and other pollinators all need nectar plants (flowers) for food. Native nectar plants supply a greater quantity and quality of nectar than the cultivars used for most urban and HOA landscaping, so it is encouraged to plant as much native nectar in landscapes, open fields and even along roadways as possible.

There are several types of milkweed we can plant in southern California. The most important distinction is whether the milkweed is native or tropical (*Asclepias curassavica*).



NATIVE MILKWEED



NATIVE MILKWEED



Native (see 2 varieties in photos below on previous page) is recommended because it is perennial, lives year after year, but dies back by early to mid-November. This die back helps trigger monarchs born in October to migrate, which strengthens the population as weak or sick monarchs die off in the migration process. It also dies back and kills *Ophryocystis elektroscirha* (O.e.), a microscopic parasite on milkweed leaves that larva ingest and that will disable or kill monarch caterpillars and butterflies at high enough concentrations.

Tropical milkweed is not a perennial and continues to leaf out year-round, even after monarchs have eaten off every leaf. As a result, the O.e. parasite can continue to accumulate over two plus years, causing deadly accumulation of O.e. This O.e. accumulation can kill monarch larva and disable butterflies in the chrysalis. They emerge unable to fly to nectar and die within two days. So, if tropical milkweed is planted, it must be pruned to 8" stems and all leaves stripped off by mid-October every year to eliminate O.e. The plants usually leaf out again within 4 to 6 weeks. Tropical milkweed is sold at large retail chain stores and by major growers while native milkweed is purchased from special native plant growers.

For a brief flyer on how to plant and maintain a Butterfly Garden, download Monarch Joint Venture's Gardening for Monarchs <https://www.monarchjointventure.org/images/uploads/documents/GardeningforMonarchs.pdf>

Monarch Joint Venture (MJV) is a partnership of federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and academic programs working together to protect the monarch migration across the United States. The MJV mission is to protect monarchs and their migration by collaborating with partners to deliver habitat conservation, education, and science across the United States.

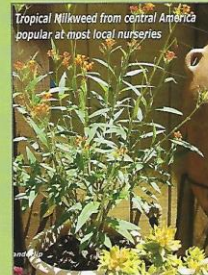
Landscapers, HOAs, and homeowners can find appropriate native monarch nectar plants for southern California using the Xerces Society's Monarch Nectar Guides (<http://www.xerces.org/monarch-nectar-plants/>). There are several plant nurseries

in Southern California that can also recommend good pollinator plants for your association.

Some essential tips for creating an HOA Butterfly Garden:

- A Butterfly Garden can be created in any open space protected from untimely mowing or pesticide application. It is important for landscapers and HOA boards to communicate and train personnel how to care for the plants in a Butterfly Garden. They are not to be trimmed back, mowed, or pulled out. Milkweeds provide food for monarch caterpillars so milkweed will get thoroughly eaten down to the stems but will grow back with more leaves to feed many more monarch larva/caterpillars. They should not be pulled out. Everyone needs to anticipate that monarch caterpillars are the goal. Since monarch larva only eat milkweed, they will not disturb the rest of the HOA plants. In fact, a Butterfly Garden that attracts monarchs can improve the plants because they pollinate flowers as they drink nectar. One common landscaping plant monarch butterflies especially like is lantana, an absolute favorite!
- Nectar flowers provide food for adult butterflies. For landscapers, it is important to note that when choosing nectar plants, a combination of early, middle and late blooming species, with overlap in flowering times, is essential to fuel butterfly breeding and migration and provide beautiful blooms all season long.
- Insecticides should never be used in or surrounding your Butterfly Garden. Limit use of herbicides within and surrounding the habitat only to control invasive or noxious weeds.

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TROPICAL MILKWEED



TROPICAL MILKWEED ALL EATEN BY LARVA



MONARCH CATERPILLAR-LARVA



MILKWEED SEEDS AND SEED POD

BUTTERFLY GARDENING FOR HOAS

HOAs CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE!

- HOAs have an opportunity to attract beautiful butterflies to a community and give homeowners pride and beauty to have their community labeled a Monarch Waystation by applying to Monarch Watch (Monarch Watch Monarch Waystation Program (<https://monarchwatch.org/waystations/>) for classification and a metal sign to post in the community.
- HOAs also have an opportunity to be major contributors to a less toxic environment by looking to alternative methods to control weeds, eliminating the use of any neonicotinoid pesticide and glyphosate herbicide.
- Milkweed produces seed pods as the season progresses (April thru October) that can be harvested to provide seeds for planting. If the pods are not harvested, however, they will ripen, split open, and disperse seeds which can produce new plants throughout an HOA. The decision to allow this dispersion, to pull out seedlings, or remove seed pods periodically is part of the milkweed experience.

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

1. Archived webinar series (<https://www.monarchjointventure.org/mjvprograms/education/monarch-conservation-webinar-series/>) on topics ranging from biology and research to habitat restoration and augmentation.
2. The Xerces Society Project Milkweed (<https://xerces.org/milkweed/>) website.
3. Search for pollinator plants by zip code. <http://www.pollinator.org/guides>
4. Already have a monarch habitat or project? Share it on our Monarch Conservation Efforts Map, or join a habitat certification project! (<https://www.monarchjointventure.org/mjvprograms/partnership/projects/monarch-habitat-certification-programs/>)



SUSIE VANDERLIP



WAYSTATION



MONARCH ON PENTAS