



Create a Monarch Butterfly Habitat in Your Own Garden!

Monarch numbers are declining due to loss of habitat. We have planted a variety of milkweeds, which is food for the caterpillars, and a variety of flowers to attract adult butterflies, who we hope will lay their eggs on the milkweed.

A BIT ON THE MONARCH LIFE CYCLE

MONARCH EGGS During her life span, a female Monarch may lay hundreds of eggs. She normally deposits these yellowish pinhead-sized eggs on the underside of milkweed leaves, where they will hatch in 3 to 6 days, depending on the temperature.

LARVA OR CATERPILLAR The newly hatched larva feeds voraciously on its milkweed host plant (accumulating chemicals called cardenolides which scientists believe protect adult Monarchs from bird predation and also enable individual Monarchs to be genetically traced to the species of milkweed they fed on as larvae). During the next 15-20 days, the 1/16" caterpillar grows to approximately 2" (5 cm) and increases its weight by a factor of 2,700.



To accommodate this rapid growth, the caterpillar must shed its yellow, white, and black striped skin four times before it is ready for the next stage of its development.

NECTAR PLANTS TO TRY IN YOUR GARDEN

- *Achillea* (Yarrow)
- *Alyssum*
- *Buddleia* (Butterfly Bush)
- *Cosmos*
- *Echinacea* (Cone Flower)
- *Gaillardia* (Blanket Flower)
- *Scabiosa* (Pincushion Flower)
- *Helianthus gracilentus* (Dwarf Sunflower)
- *Tithonia* (Mexican Sunflower)
- *Verbena lilacina* 'De La Mina'
- *Verbena bonariensis* (Brazilian Verbena)
- *Zinnia*



PUPA OR CHRYSALIS The mature caterpillar attaches itself to a sturdy milkweed stem or leaf by spinning a silk button from which it hangs upside down in a "j" shaped position. After 15-20 hours, the caterpillar sheds its skin, transforming into a green chrysalis, or pupa,

decorated with delicate gold spots. After about 10 days, the chrysalis becomes transparent. When its orange and black pattern becomes visible, the butterfly is ready to emerge.

ADULT MONARCH BUTTERFLY As the chrysalis splits open, the Monarch begins to pump fluid into its crumpled wings and quickly expands into a full-size adult. The butterfly rests for 3 hours or so until its wings dry and harden. Then it's ready to join in the ongoing cycle of the Monarch migration.



MILKWEEDS TO TRY IN YOUR GARDEN

- *Asclepias curassavica* (Tropical Milkweed)
- *Asclepias fascicularis* (Narrowleaf Milkweed) — CA native
- *Asclepias speciosa* (Showy Milkweed)--CA native
- *Asclepias tuberosa* (Butterfly Weed)

Lake Merritt Trials Garden

A project of the Master Gardeners of Alameda County (acmg.ucanr.edu)