



Expert tips on planting  
Milkweed in your garden

## Description

# Fall is the best time to plant the Monarch butterfly's favoured food

August 25, 2022

**Bruce Dawe**, from **Sauvons la Falaise**, shares expert information on how to plant Milkweed to help the Monarch butterfly.

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Here are three excellent web sources that offer advice on what kind to plant, when to plant and how to plant Milkweed:



Monarch butterfly on Milkweed – Image: [Fritz Flohr Reynolds](#) via [StockPholio.net](#)

## **Asclepias syriaca**

**Espace Pour la Vie Montreal: Québec’s native Milkweed**  
[espacepurlavie.ca/en/quebecs-native-milkweed](https://espacepurlavie.ca/en/quebecs-native-milkweed)

“In Québec, there are four native species:  
*Asclepias syriaca* (Common Milkweed)  
*Asclepias incarnata* (Swap Milkweed)  
*Asclepias exaltata* (Poke Milkweed) – uncommon species  
*Asclepias tuberosa* var. *interior* (Butterfly Milkweed) – endangered species in Québec”

## **When, where and how to plant Milkweed to save the Monarch butterfly: We need to stop the Monarch’s rapid descent toward extinction!**

Malia Libby, Save the Bees, Associate, September 8, 2021  
[environmentamerica.org/blogs/environment-america-blog/ame/when-where-and-how-plant-milkweed-save-monarch-butterfly](https://environmentamerica.org/blogs/environment-america-blog/ame/when-where-and-how-plant-milkweed-save-monarch-butterfly)

“When should you plant Milkweed? Ideally, the best time to plant Milkweed seeds is in the fall so that the cold temperatures and moisture that come with winter stimulate germination. You can also plant Milkweed in the springtime. However, Milkweed seeds planted in the spring must first be put in soil or moist paper towels and placed in the fridge to simulate the effects of winter. This process is called artificial stratification.”

Ideally, the best time to plant Milkweed seeds is in the fall so that the cold temperatures and moisture that come with winter stimulate germination.

“If you are starting your seeds indoors, you should begin growing the plant 4 to 8 weeks before moving them outside. No matter how long winters last in your region, just make sure to wait until after the last frost before transitioning the plants outdoors. If you are using potted Milkweeds, plant them after the last frost so that they do not die before the Monarch’s mating season.”

“You should also know where and how to plant Milkweed. Best growing practices suggest Milkweed be planted in the sunniest parts of your yard or garden. If you have a choice of soil, most milkweed species thrive in light, well-drained soils with seeds planted a quarter-inch deep. Make sure you check your seed packets or ask your local nursery for special instructions on the type of Milkweed you are planting, as there are some exceptions. Since Milkweed is a perennial plant, you won’t need to replant it every year. You can harvest the seeds from your new plants and grow them in other parts of your yard or garden if you desire.”

### **Want to help the monarch butterflies? Plant Milkweed to give Monarchs a place to lay and hide their eggs.**

Thom Smith, NatureWatch columnist, July 13, 2022

[berkshireagle.com/arts\\_and\\_culture/home-garden/thom-smith-naturewatch-monarch-butterflies](https://berkshireagle.com/arts_and_culture/home-garden/thom-smith-naturewatch-monarch-butterflies)



Monarch Butterfly caterpillar on Milkweed – Image: courtesy of TechnoparcOiseaux

### **Monarchs need Milkweed!**

“Monarchs, as caterpillars, prefer the leaves of Milkweed. Milkweed produces glycoside toxins to deter animals from eating them. Monarchs have evolved immunity to these toxins. When they feed, Monarch caterpillars store

the toxins in their body, making them taste bad. This, in turn, deters their predators. The toxins remain in their system even after metamorphosis, protecting them as adult butterflies as well.”

“Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) and Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) are two of the most common yet most important species for Monarchs in the Northeast. These plants in the Milkweed family are essential. And without these Milkweed plants, there can be no Monarch butterflies, to my thoughts, in these parts.”

#### Four plants that attract Monarch butterflies



Monarch on Goldenrod – Image: Tina Nord from Pexels

“**Goldenrod:** Goldenrod, a native common hereabouts in the Berkshires with two species: Canada Goldenrod and Tall Goldenrod. Surprisingly enough, there are 23 species in Berkshire County, but not all are necessarily common. And not one of those species has heavy grains of pollen that cause sneezing allergies. Rather, it’s the common Ragweed that provides dusty pollen as well as other plants.”

“**Cosmos:** These flowers are one of the easiest annuals to grow from seed or ready-grown at a nursery. The flowers are extremely drought and heat tolerant but will also bounce back after a light frost.”

“**Lantana:** These blooms have an instant source of nectar to offer to your foraging Monarchs. Grow lantana in full sun to prevent problems with powdery mildew. Lantana grows best in well-drained soil. For the longest bloom time, choose sterile cultivars that don’t form berries.”

‘These [Lantana] blooms have an instant source of nectar to offer to your foraging Monarchs.’

“**Zinnia:** Large butterflies like the Monarch enjoy the Zinnias that can fill up large areas of the butterfly garden. One packet of Zinnia seeds yields the promise of much nectar for monarchs and many other butterflies all summer long. If you choose red and orange types, you probably may see Hummingbirds and Hummingbird moths, as well.”



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Feature image: Monarch on Milkweed, Chris F from Pexels

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