



HOW TO BUILD A MONARCH GARDEN

When to Plant

Monarchs migrate through Oklahoma in spring (March-May) and fall (August-October), and will benefit from planting done in spring, summer, or fall. If you plant in the fall, select perennials that will die back in the winter but come back in the spring. Also, be sure to finish planting before the first frost, which is usually around November 1.

Where to Plant

Choose an area that receives 6-8 hours of sun per day. It's also best to plant in an area that is sheltered from the wind. If your site does not have windbreaks, plant some shrubs or tall grasses to shelter the site. Make sure there is a water source nearby, so that you can water the area regularly until the plants are well established. **Soil Preparation:** Prepare the soil by removing lawn or other plant cover and raking the soil. If the soil contains a lot of clay or sand, add compost to enrich it.

Size

The more plants the better, but you don't have to plant a huge area to help monarchs. An area of 100 square feet works well. Don't worry if you don't have that much space, though, even a few patio pots containing native flowers and milkweed can provide a welcome pit stop for a hungry monarch. Pollinator habitat can also be integrated with an existing vegetable or flower garden.



What to Plant



GREEN MILKWEED

MILKWEED is the monarch's host plant, and thus it is a must for a monarch garden. Monarch butterflies only lay their eggs on milkweeds and this is the only type of plant the caterpillars will eat. It is best to plant at least 10 milkweed plants of two or more species per 100 square feet. Remember monarch caterpillars eat milkweed so your milkweed might be eaten down to just a stem. That means you made a caterpillar very happy!

Monarchs also need flower power. Monarch butterflies feed on nectar. Select a variety of flowering plants with different bloom times, so that nectar is available from March through October.

Native plants are best. They require the least maintenance and are also beneficial to other types of native pollinators that are in decline. Many native plants are also perennials that will come back year after year. It's also OK to plant non-native nectar plants. Single-flowered varieties are best for butterflies.



What to Plant Continued...

Most importantly, only purchase plants from nurseries that do not use systemic insecticides or any other pesticides on their plants. These plants can be harmful to pollinators, including monarchs, and their caterpillars.

Plugs Versus Seeds: For small gardens, plant plugs (plants that have germinated and are ready for planting) for best and fastest results. In larger areas, seed mixes and milkweed seeds may be more cost-effective. Planting a combination of plugs and seeds is helpful for establishing beneficial habitat more quickly in these areas.



How to Plant

If using plant plugs, plan your garden and prepare the soil before purchasing the plants. Group plants by color and type. Butterflies are attracted to large splashes of color, especially red, orange, yellow, and purple. Place short plants in front of tall ones.

Dig a hole just large enough for the plug's roots. Gently break up the root ball with your fingers to help the roots grow into the surrounding soil. Use soil to cover the roots so that only the leaves and stem of the plant are above ground.

If seed is used, prepare the soil by raking it about six inches deep. Then spread the seeds manually or use a broadcaster for large areas. Add mulch to conserve moisture.



Maintenance

Water plants regularly until they are well established. Keep in mind that more water may be needed during hot, dry spells or if the plants appear to be drooping. Once established, native plants typically do not need additional water.

Use mulch to prevent weed growth and retain moisture. Weed manually. Remove pests by hand or by spraying with water. Do not use pesticides (insecticides, herbicides and fungicides) in the area and ask your neighbors to do the same.

In late fall, clear out any blackened stems and foliage of annual flowers to prevent the possibility of their harboring disease pathogens and insect eggs over the winter. Cut back dry stems of perennials to soil level after frost to neaten the garden and remove pest eggs and disease spores that may linger.



Other Butterfly-Friendly Features

Place dirt in a shallow container and add water to make wet mud. This provides needed water and minerals for butterflies. Add water regularly to keep the dirt wet. Include a spot with dark stones or tiles for butterflies to perch on to warm up on cool mornings.



Register

Be sure to register the monarch habitat you created at **OkiesForMonarchs.org**. The information you provide will be added to statewide and nationwide databases to track habitat increases for monarchs and other pollinators. That means your garden will be part of a swath of new habitat being planted throughout the monarch's migration and breeding range. You can also certify your habitat as a Monarch Waystation at **MonarchWatch.org**.



Ready to Get Your Hands Dirty?

Now it's time to pick out which colorful plants and flowers to add to your garden... Let the fun begin!

Download a full list of what to plant and where to buy at **OKIESFORMONARCHS.ORG**