

MONARCH NECTAR PLANTS

Inland California



Left to right: Monarch on common buttonbush, mountain monardella, and showy milkweed.

California is one of the most floristically biodiverse regions in the world, supporting unique plant communities such as prairie grasslands, chaparral, giant sequoia groves, and Joshua tree woodlands. The native plants that make up these communities in turn support an incredible array of insects and other animals, including the monarch butterfly. During spring and summer, monarchs leave hundreds of overwintering sites along the California coast and fan out across the western landscape to breed and lay eggs on milkweed, the monarch's host plant. Several generations are likely produced during this time. In the fall, adults from throughout the western U.S. migrate back to overwintering sites in California and central Mexico, where they generally remain in reproductive diapause until the spring, when the cycle begins again.

Monarchs at overwintering sites in California and Mexico have declined dramatically since monitoring began in the late 1990s. The Xerces Society's Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count, a volunteer driven effort, has documented a 74% decline in monarchs that overwinter in California since 1997. Across their range in North America, monarchs are threatened by a variety of factors. Loss of milkweed from extensive herbicide use has been a major contributing factor, and habitat loss and degradation from other causes, natural disease and predation, climate change, and widespread insecticide use are probably also contributing to monarch declines. Because of the monarch's migratory life cycle, it is important to protect and restore habitat across their entire

range. Adult monarchs depend on diverse nectar sources for food during all stages of the year, from spring and summer breeding to fall migration and overwintering. Caterpillars, on the other hand, are completely dependent on their milkweed host plants. Inadequate milkweed or nectar plant food sources at any point may impact the number of monarchs that successfully arrive at overwintering sites in the fall.

Providing milkweeds and other nectar-rich flowers that bloom where and when monarchs need them is one of the most significant actions you can take to support monarch butterfly populations. This guide features native inland California plants that have documented monarch visitation, bloom during the times of year when monarchs are present, are commercially available, and are known to be hardy. The list also includes moisture requirements, so that you can choose plants to create a drought-tolerant monarch garden, if needed. These species are well-suited for wildflower gardens, urban greenspaces, and farm field borders. Beyond supporting monarchs, many of these plants attract other nectar- and/or pollen-seeking butterflies, bees, moths, and hummingbirds. For a list of native plants that host butterflies and moths specific to your zip code see www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder. The species in this guide will be adaptable to growing conditions across most of the state, but may be less suitable for planting in the High Sierras, Modoc Plateau, and Eastern Interior Desert regions. Please consult Calflora (www.calflora.org) for details on species' distributions in your specific area.



Bloom	Common Name	Scientific Name	Flower Color	Max. Height (Feet)	Water Needs	Notes
Forbs		All species perennials, unless otherwise noted. Monarchs can be found year-round in California.				
Spring to Summer	1 Cobwebby thistle	<i>Cirsium occidentale</i>	Pink/white/purple	4	L	Biennial plant.
	2 Heartleaf milkweed	<i>Asclepias cordifolia</i>	Pink/purple	3	L	Monarch caterpillar host plant.
	3 Nettleleaf giant hyssop	<i>Agastache urticifolia</i>	Purple/red	2	L	Establishes better from transplant than seed. Tolerates clay soil and wet conditions.
Spring to Fall	4 Slender sunflower	<i>Helianthus gracilentus</i>	Yellow	1	L	Excellent butterfly nectar plant.
	5 Western vervain	<i>Verbena lasiostachys</i>	Purple	3	L	Good butterfly plant. Tolerates seasonal flooding, sand and clay. Can be used for erosion control.
	6 Common sunflower	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Yellow	5	M	Annual plant.
Summer	7 Coyote mint	<i>Monardella villosa</i>	Pink/purple	2	L	Requires good drainage.
	8 Mountain monardella	<i>Monardella odoratissima</i>	White/purple	1	L	Does best at mid to high elevations. Attracts many species of butterflies.
	9 Pacific aster	<i>Sympphyotrichum chilense</i>	Yellow/violet	4	L	Tolerates clay soils and wet or dry conditions.
Summer to Fall	10 Showy milkweed	<i>Asclepias speciosa</i>	Pink/green/purple	3	M	Monarch caterpillar host plant.
	11 California goldenrod	<i>Solidago velutina ssp. californica</i>	Yellow	3	L	Important late-season forage for bees, butterflies, wasps, beetles, and more.
	12 Narrow-leaved milkweed	<i>Asclepias fascicularis</i>	Pink/white	3	M	Monarch caterpillar host plant. Tolerates clay soils and wet or dry conditions.
Winter to Spring	13 Smooth beggartick	<i>Bidens laevis</i>	Yellow	3	H	Prefers wet areas and can be used in bioswales. Attracts beneficial insects and butterflies in the fall.
	14 Sulphur-flower buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum umbellatum</i>	Yellow	2	L	Attracts many species of bees and butterflies.
	15 Bluedicks	<i>Dichelostemma capitatum</i>	Purple	3	L	Attracts other bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. An early spring bloomer.
Shrubs and Trees						
Spring	16 Golden currant	<i>Ribes aureum</i>	Yellow	6	L	Popular with hummingbirds. Tends to prefer moist areas.
	17 Beloperone	<i>Justicia californica</i>	Red/yellow/orange	6	L	Good butterfly and bird plant.
	18 California buckeye	<i>Aesculus californica</i>	Pink/white	36	M	Nectar source for many native butterflies.
Spring to Summer	19 Desert willow	<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>	Pink/white	25	L	Fragrant flowers that hummingbirds love.
	20 Woolly yerba santa	<i>Eriodictyon tomentosum</i>	White	2	L	Attracts a wide variety of insects, including butterflies.
	21 Common buttonbrush	<i>Cephaelanthus occidentalis</i>	White	6	H	Fragrant, showy flowers that attract butterflies.
Summer to Fall	22 Rubber rabbitbrush	<i>Ericameria nauseosa</i>	Yellow	8	L	Very drought tolerant.
	23 Coyotebrush	<i>Baccharis pilularis</i>	White/yellow	6	L	Extremely drought-tolerant.
	24 Desertbroom	<i>Baccharis sarothroides</i>	Pink/white	10	L	Can be used for streambank stabilization.



Planting for Success

Monarch nectar and host plants often do best in open, sunny sites. You can attract more monarchs by planting flowers in single species clumps and choosing a variety of plants that have overlapping and sequential bloom periods. Monarchs can be present year-round in California, so you may want to provide nectar plants for migrating and breeding monarchs from spring through fall, as well as milkweeds in the spring and summer.

Why Plant Native?

Although monarchs use a variety of nectar plant species, including exotic invasives such as ice plant and cape ivy, we recommend planting native species. Native plants are often more beneficial to ecosystems, are adapted to local soils and climates, and help promote biological diversity. They can also be easier to maintain in the landscape, once established.

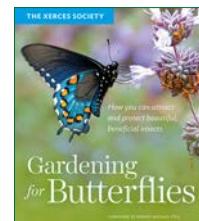
Tropical milkweed is a non-native plant that is widely available in nurseries. This milkweed can persist year-round in mild climates, allowing monarchs to breed throughout the winter rather than going into diapause. Tropical milkweed may foster higher loads of a monarch parasite called Oe (*Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*), which negatively impacts monarch health. Because of these implications, we recommend planting native milkweeds in areas where they historically occurred. You can read more about Oe in a fact sheet by the Monarch Joint Venture: http://monarchjointventure.org/images/uploads/documents/Oe_fact_sheet.pdf.

Protect Monarchs from Insecticides

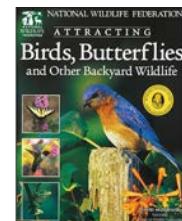
Both insecticides and herbicides can be harmful to monarchs. Herbicides can reduce floral resources and host plants. Although dependent on timing, rate, and method of application, most insecticides have the potential to poison or kill monarchs and other pollinators. Systemic insecticides, including neonicotinoids, have received significant attention for their potential role in pollinator declines (imidacloprid, dinotefuran, clothianidin, and thiamethoxam are examples of systemic insecticides now found in various farm and garden products). Because plants absorb systemic insecticides as they grow, the chemicals become distributed throughout all plant tissues, including the leaves and nectar. New research has shown that some neonicotinoids are toxic to monarch caterpillars that are poisoned as they feed on leaf tissue of treated plants. You can help protect monarchs by avoiding the use of these and other insecticides. Before purchasing plants from nurseries and garden centers, be sure to ask whether they have been treated with systemic insecticides. To read more about threats to pollinators from pesticides, please visit: www.xerces.org/pesticides.

Additional Resources

Gardening for Butterflies



Attracting Birds, Butterflies, and Other Backyard Wildlife



Available through www.xerces.org/books and <http://bit.ly/1Xhxfgu>.

Conservation Status and Ecology of the Monarch Butterfly in the U.S. Report

www.xerces.org/us-monarch-consv-report

Guide to Milkweeds and Monarchs in the Western U.S.

www.xerces.org/western-us-monarch-guide

Guide to California Native Milkweeds

www.xerces.org/ca-mw-guide

Milkweed Seed Finder

www.xerces.org/milkweed-seed-finder

Websites

The Xerces Society www.xerces.org/monarchs

Monarch Joint Venture www.monarchjointventure.org/resources

Natural Resources Conservation Service

www.nrcs.usda.gov/monarchs

National Wildlife Federation www.nwf.org/butterflies

Citizen Science Efforts in California

Xerces Society Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count

www.westernmonarchcount.org

Xerces Society & USFWS Milkweed and Monarch Survey

www.xerces.org/milkweedsurvey

Journey North www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch

Monarch Larva Monitoring Project www.mlmp.org

Project Monarch Health www.monarchparasites.org

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