

# HOW TO HELP MONARCH BUTTERFLIES

1. **Provide nectar sources for butterflies** (check butterfly gardening literature, since not all flowers are good nectar sources). Late blooming flowers are especially nice for Monarchs, for their September migration (do you know where they go for the winter?).  
  
Butterfly Bush (Buddleia sp.) is a low maintenance perennial bush that is especially attractive to butterflies, and is usually blooming in August and September. Blooms will be produced longer if flowers are dead-headed and the plant is watered in dry periods from springtime on.
2. **Don't use pesticides** (they are not selective about which insects are killed).
3. **Encourage milkweed to grow** (don't cut it down, or plant some if you don't have any). Milkweed is the only plant that the Monarch caterpillars will eat. As open fields and empty lots disappear, milkweed plants disappear.
4. **Raise the caterpillars and release the butterflies** (in the wild, survival rate is only 2-8% from egg to adult). I will be happy to provide you with instructions and advice.
5. **Learn about Monarchs and ask questions** - feel free to call me anytime if you have questions about Monarchs in particular, about butterflies, about butterfly gardens.

## GROWING MILKWEED

The three kinds of milkweed to plant are:

Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)

Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)

Seeds can be collected from the pods in the fall, and should be kept outside in the winter, to follow the natural cycle of cold, or stored in the refrigerator for 6 weeks.

All are best started from seed in flats. When small plants are established, they can be put into the ground. The first year the plants will be small.

Only the common milkweed will spread by the root system. Common milkweed will spread, and once established is very hard to get rid of.

I have not been fussy about soil conditions or moisture and all 3 kinds of milkweed have flourished in my gardens. The flowers are beautiful and fragrant! And I have been able to raise many, many beautiful Monarch butterflies from eggs/caterpillars found in the wild.

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*Check out [www.massbutterflies.org](http://www.massbutterflies.org)  
for butterfly photos, field trip schedule (free and open to the public), Monarch Guardian program,  
Massachusetts Butterfly Club information, links to related butterfly sites, etc.*