



The Land Between

Cottage Country's Conservation Organization

www.thelandbetween.ca

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MILKWEED MOVEMENT

BRING BACK THE MONARCH



MILKWEED MOVEMENT- BRING BACK THE MONARCH

In the summer of 2013 I saw 4 monarch butterflies. How many did you see last year? The fact that I, we, are even considering counting monarch's and only using one hand to do so.....is shocking and sad.

The monarch numbers are declining at a staggering rate. From covering 44.5 acres of land in the mid 90's. To a mere 1.65 acres in the winter of 2013/14.

The monarch butterfly is one of the only insects on earth that migrates south every fall. It was in the 70's that the mystery of where the monarchs overwintered was discovered. A small number went to Florida while the majority of them traveled to central Mexico. It was in 1995/96 that a system for recording their population was developed. Their numbers were established by counting the acreage of land blanketed in black and orange. The numbers that now gather in the trees north of Mexico city have been declining at a startling rate. There are several causes for their decline. Severe weather events, logging in Mexico, and lack of plant material.

This amazing butterfly travels some 5,000 kilometers south to Mexico each fall. Here they stay till the temperatures rise and the hours of sunlight increase before starting their journey back up north. The return trip from Mexico through the United States and into Canada takes several generations. Along the way they lay their eggs on milkweed so the next generation can carry on the journey. A milkweed plant can be host to only one egg. So in other words one milkweed plant equals one monarch butterfly.

There are a few things we can do as individuals to help the monarch butterfly and one of them is to plant milkweed. You can designate an area of your yard or incorporate milkweed into your exciting flower beds. If space is an issue try a planter on a deck or balcony.

Milkweed is the life line to the monarch's existence. It is the larva first and only meal enabling it to bulk up quickly into a caterpillar and then sustain itself for the 2 week chrysalis stage. It is also believed that the milkweed leaves a bitter taste in a predators mouth so they are left alone.

There are 4 types of milkweed that we can grow for the larva

- common milkweed (*Asclepias syrica*)- loamy soil- tolerates pt. shade and grows slowly
- swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarata*)- moist soil – sunny
- butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)-open sandy dry fields- full to pt. sun
- poke milkweed (*Asclepias exaltata*) -rich moist wood lands - partial sun

Buy your milkweed seeds or plant plugs locally. The cost of seeds is roughly \$3. for 30 seeds. The best time of the year for planting is in the spring. Most instruction for seed say to put them in the freezer for several weeks. This will trick the seeds into thinking they've wintered outside.

On the Adult butterflies menu you can plant black eyed Susan, wild Bergamont, goldenrod, common yarrow, new England aster, Boneset, purple Coneflower

Plant some or all of these in a sunny location that is sheltered from the wind. The butterflies are most active between 10 am. And 3 pm.

For more information on plant material

www.naturecanada.ca/take_action_monarch_friendly_garden.asp

The dog strangling vine verses the common milkweed

The Dog strangling Vine was introduced to N. American in the 1800's. Similar to the Loosestrife it has no known natural controls. It's similar enough to the common milkweed that the monarch butterfly will lay an egg on it. Unfortunately the larvae on the dog strangling vine die.

This vine can be identified by the way it twists around the things it climbs having no tendrils like a

grape vine and no suckers like the Virginia Creeper. It has pairs of pointed oval leaves about 3" - 4" long on opposite sides of the stem.

For more information on identifying the vine www.invadingspecies.com/invaders/plant-terrestrial/dog-strangling

The Monarch Butterfly is so worth saving if not just for its amazing colours and being one if not the only butterfly people can recognize at a glance. Its strength to travel such a great distance and the mystery of how it navigates its way north having never made the trip before. It pollinates our food and is food for others. In Canada and the USA we are the summer host to this amazing global traveler.

So be a part of the Milkweed Movement. Plant milkweed.

It's a tiny obtainable step we can take to contribute to the existence of this incredible insect.

The overwhelming information coming at us daily about the destruction of our ecosystem can leave a person feeling helpless. Planting milkweed and being aware of our surroundings and how we treat it is a small step but in large numbers a mighty step.

www.davidsuzuki.org/monarch

www.empowermenthouse.ca/david-suzuki-time

<http://rt.com/usa/monsanto-roundup-monarch-butterflies-483/>

www.fromthetrenchesworldreport.com/not-just-the-bees-disappearance

More Interesting facts

-The Mexicans look for the monarch butterfly to arrive on the "Day of the Dead"