



# Nantucket Conservation Foundation Science and Stewardship Department



## Monarchs and other pollinators:

Many native pollinator populations including bees, butterflies and other insects are in decline. Their populations are threatened by habitat loss, fragmentation, pesticide and herbicide use and introduced diseases.



Monarchs breed throughout the US and southern Canada during the spring and summer. In the fall, adults migrate to the Oyamel fir forests in Mexico where they spend the winter. In the spring, the Monarchs fly north in search for milkweeds where they can lay their eggs. As the monarchs spread northwards, several generations are produced.

Monarch populations have been steadily declining since population monitoring began in 1976. Populations in recent winters have dropped to 80% below the long term average.

## Threats to populations:



Monarch caterpillar

Threats to Monarch populations come from several different sources:

**Loss of habitat:** both their overwintering sites and their spring and summer range suffer from habitat loss. Logging of the Oyamel fir forests, development of rural lands, and changing agricultural practices contribute to this issue.

**Increased use of herbicide:** the increased and widespread use on agricultural crops has severely diminished milkweed populations which were historically much more abundant in agricultural fields.

**Natural disease**  
**Climate change**

## How you can help:

### Plant native milkweeds:

Monarchs rely on milkweeds to complete their life cycle. Planting milkweeds provides a place for the monarchs to lay their eggs and to feed. Milkweeds also provide nectar to other butterflies, bees and hummingbirds. Planting native milkweeds reduces the risk of introduced diseases.



*Cirsium pumilum*, Pasture Thistle



*Asclepias tuberosa*, Butterfly Milkweed

### Plant pollinator gardens:

Monarchs drink the nectar of a wide variety of flowers, this helps them to find different sources of food throughout the spring and summer. Planting a mix of native flowers with different bloom times will provide food for Monarchs and other pollinators from spring through fall. Not only will these gardens help monarchs, but they will help many other native pollinators that are threatened. They also provide important areas of natural habitat within developed areas.



*Asclepias syriaca*, Common Milkweed



*Asclepias incarnata*, Swamp Milkweed

### Minimize herbicide and pesticide use:

Pesticides can kill the eggs and larva of monarchs. Herbicides can kill native plants that pollinators use as food sources.



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