



5 ways to help monarchs

1. Plant Milkweed

Milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.) is the only plant monarch caterpillars can eat, making it essential for their survival. Planting native milkweed species in your yard, garden, or community space provides monarchs with the food they need to complete their life cycle. Choose species that are native to Connecticut to ensure the best support for local monarch populations.

*Fun Fact: Monarchs especially love the three milkweed species that are easy to find and grow. These include common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), and swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*).*

2. Maintain Milkweed and Monarch Habitat by Mowing

Current work at CAES suggests that mowing milkweed at the right time can actually help monarchs. Cutting back milkweed in mid-summer encourages fresh, young vegetative growth later in the season. This new growth is especially important for monarch survival—caterpillars grow faster, larger, and have higher survival rates when feeding on young milkweed. Monarch butterflies also prefer to lay their eggs (oviposit) on younger plants, making regrowth patches ideal for reproduction. To support monarchs, consider mowing a portion of your milkweed habitat in stages, allowing for a mix of mature and regenerating plants throughout the season.

Tip: Avoid mowing all at once. Staggered mowing supports continuous habitat availability and other insects that use milkweed.

3. Support Monarchs in Their Natural Habitat

While it may be tempting to raise monarch eggs or caterpillars indoors, doing so can disrupt their natural development and increase the risk of disease. Monarchs raised in artificial conditions may not develop the strength, instincts, or timing needed for their long-distance journey to their overwintering site in Mexico. Monarchs are also an important part of the ecosystem. They serve as prey for birds and other wildlife, contributing to a balanced food web. By removing them from the wild, we unintentionally interfere with these natural relationships. The best way to help is by allowing monarchs to grow and thrive outdoors, without human handling or intervention.

Important: In Connecticut, it is illegal to release butterflies into the wild without a permit (CGS Section 26-55-7). Focus on creating healthy outdoor habitats instead of raising monarchs by hand.

4. Follow Pesticide Labels and Regulations

Pesticides can harm monarchs at every life stage from egg to adult butterfly. Always follow federal labels and state regulations when applying any chemical treatments. Avoid spraying near milkweed or flowering plants.

5. Have a Conversation

Talk to your neighbors, schools, and local leaders about monarch conservation. Sharing knowledge about planting milkweed, reducing pesticide use, and protecting habitat can inspire others to take action. Community awareness is key to creating a landscape where monarchs can thrive.



Pollinator Advisory Committee
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Please direct all communications and inquiries to the Office of the CAES Director.

