



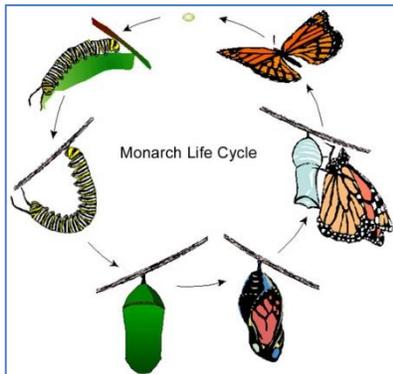
BUTTERFLY GARDEN PLANT LIST

Heart of Uwchlan Garden

May 31, 2020 –Uwchlan Township Environmental Advisory Council

WHY PLANT MILKWEEDS?

Milkweeds are the host plants that feed the caterpillars of the monarch butterflies. They only eat milkweeds. Although the adult butterflies will take nectar from many blooming plants, the caterpillars of most butterflies and moths have evolved to eat only one or two particular plants. For example, the tiger swallowtail caterpillars only eat dill, fennel, or parsley. If we want these butterflies in our garden, we need to plant the plants the caterpillars will eat.



WHY DO WE WANT BUTTERFLIES IN OUR GARDEN?

Because they are beautiful, but also because they, like the many native bees, pollinate the flowers we grow – and thus the fruits and vegetables we harvest. And it takes many caterpillars to feed the birds. Chickadee parents need to find 350 to 570 caterpillars every day, depending on the number of chicks. Multiply that by the 16 to 18 days it takes to fledge, and that's a total of 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars to bring a clutch of chickadees to maturity.

Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)



Blooms June-August – Likes Dry Soil, Sun

A native perennial. The monarch butterfly deposits its eggs on the milkweed, the caterpillars feed on the leaves. Plants grow to 2-4 feet high; long, oblong leaves grow to about eight inches long. The stems and leaves bleed a milky sap when cut. Fragrant clusters of pink-purple

flowers, seed pods two to four inches long split when ripe to cast many fine seeds to the wind.

Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) Blooms



June-July, Likes Sun, Damp Location

Another Monarch host plant. Leaves are narrow, tapering. Pink flowers. Narrow pods. Good in wet pollinator gardens, rain gardens, pond edges, and monarch habitat plantings. Bright pink flowers. Can get tall (3-4').

Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*)



Blooms July-September – Likes Sun

Host plant for monarch caterpillars that blooms later than other milkweed. Clone forming and only one to two feet tall, it forms attractive drifts of plants. Narrow three to four-inch pods form in late summer as the leaves turn to yellow and

orange providing interest well into autumn.

Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)



Blooms June-August, Sun, Dry Location

Native in milkweed family that produce flat clusters of bright orange blossoms all summer long. Nectar- and pollen-rich flowers attract hummingbirds and hordes of butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects throughout the blooming season. Food plant for monarch caterpillars. It is about one to two feet tall, with glossy, lanceolate leaves that are arranged spirally up the length of the stem. The seed pods turn brown over time and add winter interest to the garden.

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NOT TO BE CONFUSED with Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*), a fast-growing, deciduous shrub with spiked trusses that bloom from summer to autumn. While Butterfly Bush attracts butterflies, its pollen is inferior and the birds carry seeds, making it invasive.

MILKWEED SEEDS NEED “STRATIFICATION.” WHAT’S THAT?



Milkweed seeds, like the seeds of many native wildflowers, need “stratification,” or exposure to cold for a period of time, in order to germinate.

There are several ways to stratify

the seeds; one common one is to hold them in your refrigerator for a couple of months. But the method using plastic jugs as “mini greenhouses” is easier and very successful.

WHY DO WE PLANT OTHER PLANTS BESIDES MILKWEEDS?

While we need milkweeds for the monarch caterpillars to feed on, the adults who are migrating need pollen and nectar to feed on to sustain them for the trip. Planting native flowers that bloom late in the summer are essential. And there are plants that are hosts to the caterpillars and adults of other interesting butterflies as well as other pollinators like hummingbirds. Variety of shape, color, and bloom times enhance the garden appearance as well as make it more ecologically diverse

REFERENCES

- **Bringing Nature Home** by Douglas W. Tallamy (Timber Press, 2015). Also **Nature’s Best Hope – A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard** (2020).
- **Attracting Native Pollinators**, a Xerces Society Guide
- **Butterfly Gardening with Native Plants**, by Christopher Kline
- **Attracting Birds, Butterflies, and other Backyard Wildlife (Expanded Second Edition 2019)**, National Wildlife Federation
- Saveourmonarchs.org
- www.MonarchWatch.org

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Meadow Blazing Star (*Liatris ligulistylus*)

Blooms August-September – Likes Sun, Medium Soil



The ultimate Monarch magnet, a top-of-the-list as a nectar source for Monarch butterflies. Swallowtails, Sulphurs, Hairstreaks, Fritillaries, Painted Lady, Red Admiral are also likely to visit this plant along with hummingbirds and other pollinators.

Its bloom color can lean toward magenta, and the tufted blossoms often appear all at once along the stems, lasting for many weeks in late summer. The seeds are popular with Goldfinches. It can grow up to 5' tall when planted in rich soils.

About Goldenrods

Goldenrods are an important fall nectar source for many pollinators including the Monarch butterfly, so it is unfortunate that these fall blooming natives are mistakenly blamed for hay fever. The pollen of Goldenrods is transported by insects. **The pollen is not airborne and does not cause pollen related allergies.**

Showy Goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*)

Blooms Late Summer-Fall – Likes Dry Soil, Sun



Goldenrods are a critical habitat species in the fall landscape. Include them in the garden and landscape for their important ecosystem services as well as their glowing beauty! The flower spikes of Showy Goldenrod create a spectacular show from late summer through early fall. Deer Resistant.

Smooth Aster (*Aster laevis*)

Blooms August-October–Likes Sun, Dry-Medium Soil



Produces a profusion of lavender-blue flowers in late autumn. Extremely hardy, defies frosts, blooming often into November. Flowers have yellow centers which turn reddish later in the season. Numerous blooms at end of the multiple branching stems, each around 1.25" across. The leaves are smooth to the touch. Upright with arching branches and typically about 3' tall.

Attractive to butterflies seeking nectar in the fall, it is also a **larval host for the Pearl Crescent** (*Phyciodes tharos*) butterfly. Other names include: *Symphotrichum laeve*, Smooth Blue Aster, Smooth American Aster. This Aster occurs naturally in open woods, dry to mesic prairies, man-made or disturbed habitats, meadows and fields.

Also recommended:

Pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*) – host plant of American Painted Lady butterfly

Dill plant, parsley, Queen Anne’s Lace – host plant of Black Swallowtail