



WHY PLANT MILKWEED:

In the last 15 years monarch butterflies' population has declined by 90%. This is primarily due to habitat loss. Monarch butterflies only lay eggs on milkweed and their caterpillars only eat milkweed. Unfortunately, milkweed is disappearing due to development and herbicides. But you can make a difference by planting milkweed. You can save the monarch butterfly!

HOW TO GROW MILKWEED:

- 1) Put your milkweed seeds in a paper towel and soak them in warm water overnight.
- 2) Fill a plastic seed tray, yogurt container with a hole in the bottom or paper egg carton with potting soil. Wet the soil thoroughly and let excess water drain. Put 2-3 seeds per container and cover with $\frac{1}{4}$ inch more soil. Gently mist to dampen the soil that was added.
- 3) Place your potted seeds in a sunny window and keep the soil moist (like a wrung out sponge). Seeds should germinate in 7-10 days.
- 4) Continue watering your seedlings to keep the soil moist. You may want to move your starts to a bigger container or thin them out by snipping all but the healthiest plants. The starts will be ready to transplant into your garden when they are 3-6 inches tall.
- 5) Choose a sunny spot and plant your milkweed plants together. It helps butterflies if the plants are near each other rather than spread out in the garden. Plant 18" apart. Mulch around the plant, water it once a week and wait for butterflies!
- 6) Milkweed dies back in the fall but will reemerge bigger and more beautiful each spring. Just remember where you planted it so you don't accidentally dig it up.

OTHER WAYS TO HELP MONARCHS AND OTHER BUTTERFLIES:

Planting milkweed is the first step in creating habitat for monarch butterflies because that is where they lay their eggs. It is also important to plant for adult monarchs. Most native flowers as well as Zinnias, Mexican sunflower, Dandelion and Black Eyed Susan are favorite nectar plants.

Monarch butterflies are not the only butterfly or pollinator in trouble due to habitat loss. Many native butterflies and bees have lost habitat. Consider helping them out by planting a native plant or two or three in your yard.

Finally, it is important to eliminate insecticides and herbicides from your garden. Accept a few nibbles on your plants. They might be caterpillar bites and we know what caterpillars grow up to be!