



# The Butterfly Effect

Site tells how to help save the monarch with milkweed

The butterfly effect posits that a seemingly minor event in one location can influence a later, more important event in significant ways. The example often used to explain the effect is a butterfly flaps its wings and slightly disturbs the air, which ultimately influences the course of a hurricane weeks later, halfway across the globe.

While that example seems preposterous, and is probably impossible to prove, the idea that a small act can lead to big changes is certainly true. And many small acts by many people with a shared goal can have an enormous impact.

**MonarchJointVenture.org** is the website of a partnership between federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations and academic programs with the goal of using the butterfly effect to save monarch butterflies.

The monarch is in danger due to the loss of milkweed. The butterfly is highly dependent on milkweed during the early stages of its life. The plant has been in decline due to the usual suspects: habitat loss, climate change, pesticides and various other assaults caused by human and natural activities — and the iconic bug's numbers have been dropping with it.

Monarch Joint Venture's strategy is to get lots of people throughout the monarch's range to plant milkweed in their gardens, alongside roads, in schoolyards or anywhere else there's a patch of dirt that can be cultivated. In addition to milkweed, they need a variety of nectar-producing flowers to feed on in the later stages of their lives. The cumulative effect of all of these small islands of habitat would be to give them the resources they need to succeed.

## Spectacular migration

Monarch butterflies undertake one of the most impressive migrations in nature. They travel from as far north as the Canadian border in the summer to southern Mexico in the winter, a distance of 3,000 miles. It takes them four generations to complete the round trip annually.

They need milkweed along the route to lay their eggs on. When the eggs hatch the new generation of larvae feed on the plant. After the larva forms a chrysalis, and then transforms into an adult butterfly, it needs nectar to fuel its long flight. The more milkweed and nectar sources people plant, the better the chance that the butterflies can complete their trip.

This is just a brief outline of the monarchs' problems and potential solutions. Monarch Joint Venture goes into much greater detail on the site about the various causes of the bugs' plight and how people can help them to successfully continue their flight.

It delves into the specifics of habitat loss and other threats. It also specifies which species of milkweed and nectar flowers should be planted based on where you live. And it goes into detail about where to get seeds and how, where and when to plant them.

## Smart and pretty

MonarchJointVenture.org is full of useful information and it's all put together in a very nice package. The site has a clean, contemporary design. It's full of good photography, which shouldn't be a surprise given the subject matter. The typography has a clear hierarchy and is consistent throughout the site. The color palette is tastefully done, but the graphics are inconsistent in quality.

The navigation is clearly labeled and intuitive. The only problem with the navigation might be that there's too much of it. There is so much information on the site organized into so many different sections that it can become overwhelming. There are numerous links scattered among the many sections that take you to even more information on related sites. It's easy to get lost in the abundance of information while looking for an answer to a question.

I went to this site looking for a simple explanation of how I could plant milkweed to help the butterflies. I eventually got my questions answered, but I had to do some digging. All I wanted was the gentle flutter of butterfly wings but it tuned into a hurricane.

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