

About Monarch Butterflies

- Much of Florida's monarch population don't migrate and can be found in the state year-round, breeding continuously throughout the year, according to the University of Florida.
- Two black spots in the center of their hind wings differentiate males from females. These spots are scent glands that help males attract female mates.
- Monarchs lay their eggs one by one on the underside of leaves and sometimes on the flowers of different milkweeds.
- Life cycle from egg to adult takes less than a month.
- Like most butterflies, monarchs are pollinators that play a vital ecological role in maintaining biological diversity.
- Numbers are in decline. The National Wildlife Federation notes that over 90 percent of the grassland ecosystems along the eastern monarch's central migratory flyway corridor have been lost, converted to intensive agriculture or urban development.

Ways to Save the Monarch Butterfly

- Plant native milkweeds, the only host plant of the caterpillar. There are 21 native milkweed species in Florida and eight native species in south Florida. Local nurseries sell milkweed free of chemicals. Ask before buying.
- Choose nectar plants that provide food for adults, like climbing aster (*Symphotrichum carolinianum*), cat's tongue (*Melanthera nivea*) and blazing star (*Liatris garberi, gracilis, or chapmanii*).
- Keep plants wrongfully considered weeds, such as mist flower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*), Spanish needles (*Bidens alba* or *bipinnata*) and Scorpiontail (*Heliotropium angiospermum*).
- Do not spray chemicals, such as herbicides and pesticides. Also, keep in mind that some commercial fertilizers incorporate pesticides in the product.