

Make a Monarch Garden

The Monarch Butterfly is a species that doesn't stay in Canada for the winter – it flies as far as Mexico! That adds up to a migration of over 4,000 kilometres round trip (there and back). Monarchs are also listed as an endangered species on Canada's species at risk registry, so we thought spring would be the perfect time for you to work on a project to help them! Here's how to grow a garden they will love.

Illustration by Ashley Barron

IT'S A TEAM EFFORT

No single butterfly leaves for the winter and comes back six months later in the spring. Some Monarchs live as adult butterflies only for a few weeks to a few months, so it is the eggs they lay along the journey that become the new Monarchs that continue the journey. It's like a giant relay race!

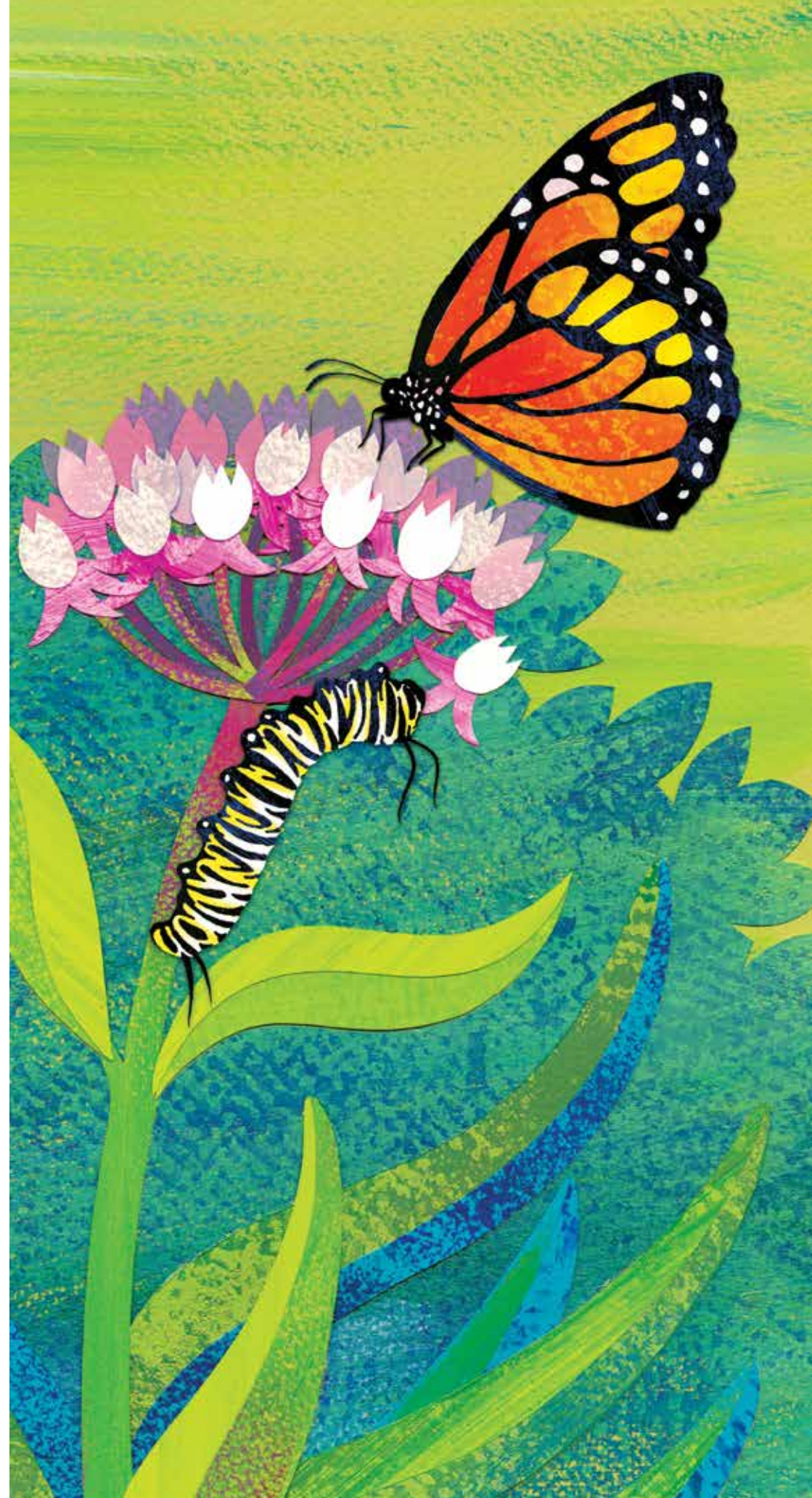
Having milkweed plants along the way spreads out the success of the next generation of little caterpillars to keep the migration going. Isn't it amazing that they always know the right direction to go without ever having undertaken the flight before? It's like Monarchs have a built-in compass that directs them. It's one of the most wonderful natural events in the world of insects!

GET GARDENING

- **Ask** your family, school, community centre, city councillor if you can create a Monarch garden.
- **Do** you have a lot of space or just a little? You can do well with both!
- **In** a little space, focus on milkweed.
- **In** a lot of space, you can think about milkweed AND nectar-producing plants. Keep reading...
- **Milkweeds** are a large group of plants that grow anywhere from 20 to 180 centimetres high. Their flowers range from white and greenish to pale pink and deep magenta.
- **In** any "gardening for wildlife" project, giving animals some kind of shelter is valuable. In this case, think about a variety of plants. When taking shelter, most butterflies perch on the underside of a leaf or crawl deep between blades of grass or into a rock crevice. Do you have anything like this in your space already?
- **Remember:** Natural is beautiful! Having natural spaces filled with nectar and milkweed is critical for Monarchs.
- **Helpful tip:** Plant at least six of your milkweed plants together (or there's a chance the caterpillars will run out of milkweed).
- **Include** other nectar-producing options for the adults: Crabapple, Hawthorn, Lilac, Bleeding Heart, Dogwood and Lupine are great ones to research.

THINK TWICE

- **Don't** use pesticides and herbicides: they can kill the "weeds" that Monarchs need.
- **Don't** plant invasive species that can spread and crowd out other helpful plants. Ask your nursery about these.



THE MILKWEED PLANT!

Monarch Butterflies need milkweed plants. Before they are adult butterflies, they start out as caterpillars who ONLY feed on milkweed plants. These are also the same plants that Monarchs lay their eggs on, so having milkweed around is a big deal! There are 14 kinds of milkweed plants native to Canada, so be sure to ask your local nursery which variety is best for your region. Common Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed and Butterfly Milkweed are popular and native throughout Canada.

CANADIAN CHECKLIST

- Common Milkweed
- Swamp Milkweed
- Butterfly Milkweed
- Showy Milkweed
- Whorled Milkweed
- Dwarf Milkweed/
Low Milkweed/Oval-
Leafed Milkweed
- Poke Milkweed
- Woolly Milkweed/
Sidecluster Milkweed
- Tall Green Milkweed/
Prairie Milkweed
- Green Milkweed
- Purple Milkweed
- Sullivant's Milkweed/
Prairie Milkweed
- Four-Leaved Milkweed