

GARDEN CLUBS OF ILLINOIS PRESIDENT'S PROJECT– MILKWEED FOR MONARCHS

Most of you have read many statistics about the catastrophic plummeting number of monarchs seen in Mexico, their migration site and all across Texas, the Midwest (including Illinois) and Canada. Each of us, although we are only One can do something to help reverse monarch numbers and assure that there will be monarchs in our future. And that is... Plant Milkweed! – the only plant that monarchs will lay their eggs on. Every member of Garden Clubs of Illinois and every GCI club can take part in helping to bring back monarchs, one milkweed plant at a time, one re-seeded back road at a time with no expense or modest expense to individual or club.

Milkweed For Monarchs is being developed as a multifaceted project involving planting native swamp milkweed, (*Asclepias incarnata*), butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), and common milkweed (*Asclepias Syriaca*) where appropriate throughout the state.

1. GCI will partner with the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources to get flower seed including milkweed into any roadside restoration projects or construction being done around the state such as infields, ramps and interchanges. Operation Wildflower Chairman Barbara Bischoff Kleeman is already in discussion with Steven Gobelman, Roadside Operations Manager at the Schaumburg office of IDOT.

2. We are partnering with Wade Johnson's 501c3 charity, Save Our Monarchs Foundation from Minnesota, which is dedicated to giving away 350,000 swamp milkweed seed packets by 2015. Think of ways to pass out seed— you as an individual or your club: Fund raisers, Earth Day events, Arbor Day, special programs. Other organizations: Women's clubs, church groups, Girl and Boy Scouts, 4-H—all waiting to distribute and plant milkweed seed around our beautiful state. For seed packets immediately, contact SaveOurMonarchs.org. Imagine GCI and Illinois being the “poster child” for other states to emulate in helping to save monarchs.

All Illinois garden clubs will collect milkweed— swamp milkweed, butterfly weed, and common milkweed. These seeds can still be found in winter in pods, not just in fall.

1. Garden club members will find byways in their communities and disperse seed along Osage orange hedgerows or wild areas where there will be no complaints —not near farmer's fields.

2. Garden club members will collect and clean the three kinds of milkweed seed. Any seed they don't need for their individual club dispersal project they will send to me or the GCI office, keeping the varieties separate and labeled. This seed may go to IDOT projects or may go back into the GCI Milkweed For Monarchs seed dispersal project. (See No. 3)

3. Club members who do not have access to wild seed or garden grown milkweed seeds but want to help plant milkweeds on byways or in their individual gardens may contact me by sending a Stamped Self Addressed Envelope with a dollar bill in it. I will send them a modest package of the seed of their choice with instructions. Call me if you need advice.

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