

According to the National Wildlife Federation, about 75% of flowering plants rely on pollinators, such as the graceful monarch butterfly. But sadly, pollinators—especially monarchs—are on the decline worldwide. In California alone, the number of **overwintering monarchs up and down the coast since the mid-1990's has declined by nearly 90 percent.**

The best way to both help monarchs and attract them to your yard is to provide milkweed—an important host plant and food source for their caterpillars.

There are many different types of milkweed plants, so be sure to check which are indigenous to your region before planting. Here are five types that are native to the eastern two-thirds of North America, except for showy milkweed, found from the central states west to California and Oregon.

- **Whorled milkweed** prefers really dry and sandy soils. Its white flowers appear between July and September and also entice native bees.
- **Butterflyweed's** orange flowers attract many butterfly species in addition to monarchs, including tiger, spicebush and pipevine swallowtails.
- **Common milkweed** blooms purplish flowers from early to mid-summer. Be sure to plant with caution, as this plant's aggressive nature can take over a garden.
- **Swamp milkweed** prefers wet conditions in the wild but many gardeners find that it will also take to the average garden soil.
- **Showy milkweed** boasts clusters of pink, star-shaped flowers and thrives in most western habitats, except deserts and high mountains.