



Photos from the National Butterfly Center website & Facebook page

MILKWEEDS IN OCTOBER LANDSCAPES HELP PRODUCE 5th GENERATION OF MONARCHS

By Marianna T. Wright
Executive Director, [National Butterfly Center](http://www.nationalbutterflycenter.org)
Mission, TX

Look to the skies! The Monarch migration is headed for the Gulf Coast, right on time. Historically, the first migrants to reach Texas arrive on Columbus Day - you can practically set your clocks by them. Of course, weather plays a big factor in this. Monarchs are large butterflies with an incredibly efficient, sailing flight that allows them to ride currents up to 12,000 feet high. This prevents them from hitting windshields and from having to navigate around trees and buildings.

The expected cold front will provide precisely the tail wind Monarchs need to get here. Most will pass through, but the Houston-Galveston Gulf Coast area is known to have at least one over-wintering, non-migratory colony. Scientists have yet to study this group of Monarchs, but suspect climate change is making it possible for some to stay instead of traveling

NATURE'S WAY 
RESOURCES
an organically based service company

www.natureswayresources.com



L to r, Sand (Asclepias arenaria) to Shore (Asclepias perennis), and Slim (Asclepias linearis) to Longleaf (Asclepias longifolia).

To support species health and increase (for all butterflies, not just the Monarch), the best thing people can do is plant native host and nectar sources. There are several milkweeds native to Texas and good for this region, from Sand (*Asclepias arenaria*) to Shore (*Asclepias perennis*), and Slim (*Asclepias linearis*) to Longleaf (*Asclepias longifolia*).

Get to know your local native plant society or join the [Butterfly Enthusiasts of Southeast Texas \(BEST\)](#) Chapter of the [North American Butterfly Association](#), to learn more about what will work best in your yard.

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department has also published an excellent photographic guide to Identification of [Milkweed in Texas](#). Having milkweed in the landscape in October helps produce the 5th Generation of Monarchs. This special crop does not mate or lay eggs after eclosing*; they are simply born to fly to Mexico, where they may survive the winter and return in the spring to bear the 1st Generation in a new year.

(*eclosing: to come out of the egg or the pupa case)



Top two favorites of Monarchs, left, are Blue Mistflowers and Seaside Goldenrod

101 Sherbrook Circle • Conroe, Texas 77385-7750
(936) 321-6990 Metro • (936) 273-1200 Conroe • Fax (936) 273-1655

NATURE'S WAY
RESOURCES
an organically based service company

www.natureswayresources.com

If you only have room for two nectar sources, I strongly recommend the two most preferred nectars for Monarchs: Blue Mistflower (*Chromolaena odorata*) and Seaside Goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens* L.). Both bloom predictably in fall and require little maintenance.

Frostweed, scarlet sage, cowpen daisy and tickweed (*Bidens pilosa*) are also good -- but may all be considered "invasive" -- as may goldenrod and mistflowers.



Other great Monarch flowers, l to r, tickseed, scarlet sage, cowpen daisy, thistle and spiny aster

Thistle and spiny aster (*Chlorocantha spirosa*) are also good, but may not be favored for home gardens/landscapes. Spiny aster is pretty, but not at all showy or dense. Not something that people see here and say, "Do you have that for sale? I want to grow that!"