

Planning a garden for monarch butterflies

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Image 1. A tiger swallowtail lands on a lantana bloom at the Smithsonian Gardens' Pollinator Garden. Photo by: James Gagliardi/Smithsonian Gardens

Monarch butterflies are a type of butterfly. They are known for their orange and black coloring. They are on the move. They are flying from the northeastern part of the United States and Canada to Mexico. Mexico is their home for the winter. On the way, they might rest in your backyard. Butterflies drink nectar from flowers. So if your yard has nectar, they might stop for a snack. What if none of the yards have flowers for the monarchs? You can make sure they do.

James Gagliardi and Sylvia Schmeichel are experts at planting gardens. They work at a garden at a museum. The museum is in Washington, D.C. They have tips for planting the right flowers. The right flowers will bring monarch butterflies. Monarchs are pollinators. Pollinators bring pollen from one plant to another. This helps create new plants.

Different Kinds Of Pollinators

Gagliardi and Schmeichel want kids and parents to plan gardens. They think you should keep in mind many types of animals. Monarchs are not the only pollinators.

Gagliardi said, "Different pollinators connect with different plants in different ways. Beetles are pollinators. Hummingbirds, flies, bees, moths."

Gagliardi says to find out which plants are from your area. You can find out what animals like those plants. Mountain mint, asters and goldenrod are good to plant.

Schmeichel said to plant different types of plants. That way, plants will bloom all year. If you would like a certain pollinator to visit your garden, you can read about what plants they like.

Outside Containers

You do not need a big space to plant. Schmeichel said you can even plant in a container. The container must be outside.

You can plant with seeds or already grown plants.

Seeds take a longer time to grow. Plants cost more money.

Some flowers come from bulbs. For example, daffodils, crocuses and snowdrops. These bulbs must be planted in the fall. They bloom in the spring. It is important to think ahead when planting a garden.

Gagliardi said that insects will start eating at the end of winter. That is a good sign.

Planting gardens for pollinators helps other animals and people, too. Pollinated plants make berries and seeds that other animals eat. Much of the world's food needs pollinators to grow.

Schmeichel said, "Every third bite of food is thanks to a pollinator." Think about that next time you eat.



Quiz

- 1 Read the following selection from the section "Outside Containers."

These bulbs must be planted in the fall. They bloom in the spring. It is important to think ahead when planting a garden.

What does the phrase "think ahead" mean?

- (A) plan
- (B) stop
- (C) grow
- (D) act

- 2 Read the selection below from the introduction [paragraphs 1-2].

They work at a garden at a museum. The museum is in Washington, D.C. They have tips for planting the right flowers. The right flowers will bring monarch butterflies.

Which word could replace "tips" WITHOUT changing the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) secrets
- (B) advice
- (C) problems
- (D) rewards

- 3 Sylvia Schmeichel thinks children and parents should plant different types of plants.

WHY does she think this?

- (A) because she works at a museum in Washington, D.C.
- (B) because seeds take longer to grow than bulbs
- (C) because she wants people to attract monarchs only
- (D) because the garden can have plants all year long

- 4 The author has an opinion about making gardens for pollinators.

Which sentence from the article shows this?

- (A) James Gagliardi and Sylvia Schmeichel are experts at planting gardens.
- (B) Pollinators bring pollen from one plant to another.
- (C) If you would like a certain pollinator to visit your garden, you can read about what plants they like.
- (D) Planting gardens for pollinators helps other animals and people, too.