

How Many Milkweed Plants does it Take to Start a Butterfly Garden?

Often people ask me the following question: "how many milkweed plants do I need to start a monarch butterfly garden?" I usually relate my own beginning story after I found out about the monarch numbers declining: back in late June of 2017 while I was raising the Black Eastern Swallowtail butterfly, by chance I read about the monarch butterfly survival troubles and my first instinct was to go online and order 2 milkweed plants from this site: <https://www.onplants.ca/>

Thereafter I came across the monarch watch waystation recommendation of at least 10 milkweed plants: <https://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations> now I got busy making phone calls until E.R.C.A. gave me an Amherstburg web link <http://www.nativetreesandplants.com/index.html> so then I order 8 more plants (4 butterfly weed and 4 swamp milkweed) and watch my babies grow all summer without seeing a monarch butterfly.

By the second week of September while watering the house front flowers I noticed a big monarch caterpillar (instar 5) on my swamp milkweed plant, so I took it inside to my mesh cage where he formed a chrysalis in two days and flew away 10 days after that. I guess do to my location the monarchs didn't find my milkweed plants, so after many hours of online reading during the fall of 2017 I started planting more seeds in December outdoor and in February indoor for the following spring.

Now with 10 two years old plants and a whole bunch of new small in 4" pots in no time at all by the third week of May 2018 I started to see 2-3 monarchs females every day and leaving an average of 60-70 eggs on our milkweed plants.

These were the results during the summer of 2018:

<http://savethemonarchbutterfly.ca/Monarchs-Backyard-2018.pdf>

The moral of this story is that if you're starting fresh with no existing milkweed plants on your garden you should consider planting at least 10 plants if they're small.

A monarch female can lay a lot of eggs, and if you don't have enough food for the hungry cats unfortunately they will not make it to adulthood butterfly.

As you share your enthusiasm about your butterfly garden with your friends and family make them aware that planting milkweed it's not like buying a flower plants, most people need to be educated that milkweed is the only source of food of the monarch butterfly babies, therefore it is our responsibility to have plenty of it around during the monarch breeding season.

During my regular milkweed presentations to any group I always stress the importance of having as much milkweed as they possibly can, in order to help the monarch life cycle. If you have any questions call me anytime: Leo 519.977.3639