

Mississippi Natural Resources Conservation Service Celebrates National Pollinator Week 2015! June 15-19

Conservation Planning to Support Pollinators

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is America’s foremost conservation planner for private landowners. One resource concern that has gained increasing prominence is the decline of pollinator species throughout the United States. One way to support declining pollinator species is to improve or develop new habitat. NRCS works with landowners to establish or protect pollinator habitat on a variety of land uses throughout the nation.

Regardless of the pollinator species, pollinator needs are largely covered by:

- 1) Providing food sources (i.e., pollen and nectar from blooming flowers)
- 2) Providing habitat (e.g., undisturbed areas for nesting. For example, bumble bees nest in underground colonies located in abandoned rodent burrows)
- 3) Protecting from pesticides (i.e., some areas of farms or urban areas should not be treated with chemicals)

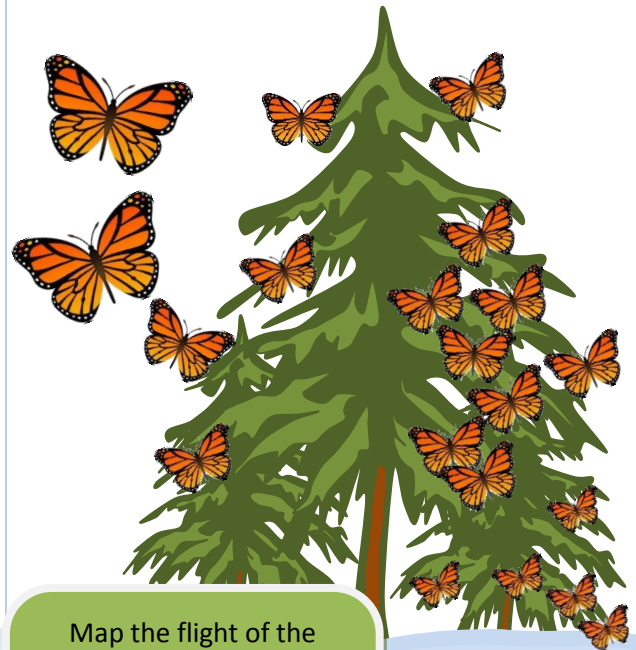
Recent declines in the numbers of Monarch butterflies have renewed the need for more pollinator habitat. The Monarch butterfly is unique for several reasons:

- 1) The butterflies migrate from southern Mexico to Canada every year (summers are spent in Canada and winters in Mexico). The journey one-way takes four different generations of butterflies.
- 2) Each butterfly MUST lay eggs on a milkweed plant because it is the only source of food for caterpillars. There are many milkweed species.
- 3) The successful migration requires not only milkweed plants for caterpillars, but also nectar sources from blooming flowers throughout spring, summer, and fall around the migration route.



A monarch butterfly collects nectar from a flower. USDA photo by Charles Bryson

MONARCH BUTTERFLIES OVERWINTER IN THE FORESTS OF MEXICO, BUT START THEIR JOURNEY TOWARD CANADA AROUND MARCH.



Map the flight of the Monarch Butterfly across North America!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqDwvuleRYc>

POLLINATOR WEEK 2015

Monarchs in Mississippi

Mississippi covers the region referred to as the “second generation spring range”, as the butterflies travel up from Mexico on their way to summer breeding ranges in the Great Plains areas and Canada. In August, the butterflies go back to Mexico for the winter and again pass through Mississippi. This means that resource planners should include both spring, summer, and fall blooming species in seed mixes for butterfly habitat.

Fast Facts: Supporting Monarchs in Mississippi

- Click on this YouTube video to map the migration of the Monarch
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqDwwuleRYc>
- Butterflies need both milkweed plants for caterpillar food and other flowering species for adults to survive on the migration
- If you have to apply or spray pesticides, the Xerces society recommends applying late in the evening to avoid spraying pollinators. They also recommend that you avoid spraying blooming flowers if possible.
- Encourage your school or nonprofit group to plant milkweeds in your landscaping. The MonarchWatch group may be able to send you plants or seed for free! [Monarch Watch link](#)
- Set aside areas of your yard or farm that are not tilled or sprayed. Lots of native bee species nest in the bare ground under grass plants.
- Do not forget to add some native warm-season grasses to your pollinator seed mixes. Pollinators use grasses to rest or as habitat. Good choices are little or big bluestem, but avoid switchgrass as it can take over your landscaping.



Above: Beardtongue (white flower) provides excellent spring nectar for pollinators

Below: Native mason bees can nest in constructed nesting boxes

