



GARDEN
FOR WILDLIFE

How to Provide Water in Monarch Gardens

You can enhance your monarch garden by offering special butterfly water sources in addition to planting native blooming plants that provide nectar, milkweed plants for monarch caterpillars to eat and by not using pesticides.

Monarchs and other butterflies need moisture but cannot land on water to drink, so a typical garden pond, fountain or birdbath won't help them. Instead, butterflies sip liquid from muddy soil. This behavior is known as "puddling" and not only provides moisture but also salts and other dissolved minerals that the butterflies need. Male butterflies need minerals to produce the pheromones they use to attract mates, and also pass them to female butterflies during reproduction to help support egg-laying. Puddling behavior is most common in the hotter months and during the hottest times of the day, typically between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. in most regions.

BY CREATING A BUTTERFLY-FRIENDLY WATER SOURCE IN YOUR GARDEN, YOU'LL ATTRACT MORE BUTTERFLIES, BEES AND OTHER POLLINATORS, WHILE ESTABLISHING A UNIQUE FOCAL POINT IN YOUR HABITAT THAT WILL SPARK CONVERSATION WITH FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS. SOME BIRDS AND OTHER INSECTS WILL ALSO USE THE MUD AS A NEST-BUILDING MATERIAL.



Creating Butterfly Watering Areas



Puddling Area



Puddling Dish

Puddling Area: Create a natural puddling area by digging a wide, shallow depression in the ground and lining it with plastic weed barrier or pond liner for more durability. Choose a spot in your garden that gets direct sunlight, preferably near flowers. Cover with 1-2 inch layer of landscape sand mixed with compost or garden soil (you can use the soil you've dug out to form the depression). Use a hose to wet the substrate to create a wet mud. When the muddy soil dries out, add more water to keep it wet; you can also position it under drip irrigation or soaker hose to keep it moist. Add decorative rocks that will also serve as landing and basking places.

Puddling Dish: If you don't have room to create a puddling area, make a puddling dish instead. Use a shallow dish such as a flower pot drainage saucer, a pie tin, or even the bowl of a birdbath. Place the dish in a depression dug in the ground or on a pedestal like you would a birdbath. Fill the dish with a mix of landscape sand and compost or garden soil, then add water to create wet mud and keep it moist.

Insect watering dish: Fill the same kind of shallow dish with water and add decorative landscape stones. The stones will serve as landing places for butterflies and other insects trying to get a sip of water. Birds and other wildlife can get a drink too.

Fruit Feeders: Butterflies also consume nutrient-rich liquid from rotting, fermenting fruit. Place pieces of overripe fruit such as bananas, melon or apples in a shallow dish. No need to peel. Add a splash of beer or wine to enhance fermentation and a dash of salt to attract more butterflies. (Note: this could also attract wasps, raccoons or other mammals; if so, remove the feeder.)



Insect Watering Dish



Fruit Feeders



Maintaining Your Butterfly Watering Area

Butterfly watering areas are easy to maintain. For puddling areas and puddling dishes, simply keep them moist and don't allow standing water to pool up, which will attract mosquitoes. For insect watering dishes, tip them to completely drain all water every two to three days to eliminate any mosquito eggs or larvae, and refill with fresh water. For fruit feeders, periodically remove old fruit, wash with soapy water and thoroughly rinse before adding more fruit.



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