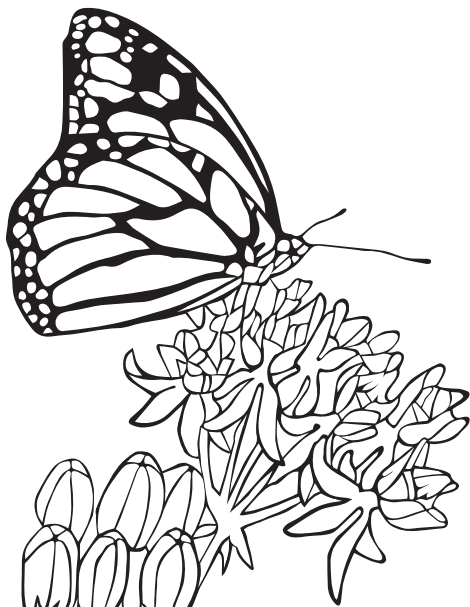


MONARCH
BUTTERFLY
Danaus plexippus

ALFALFA
Medicago sativa



BUTTERFLY
WEED

Asclepias tuberosa



ALFALFA

Medicago sativa



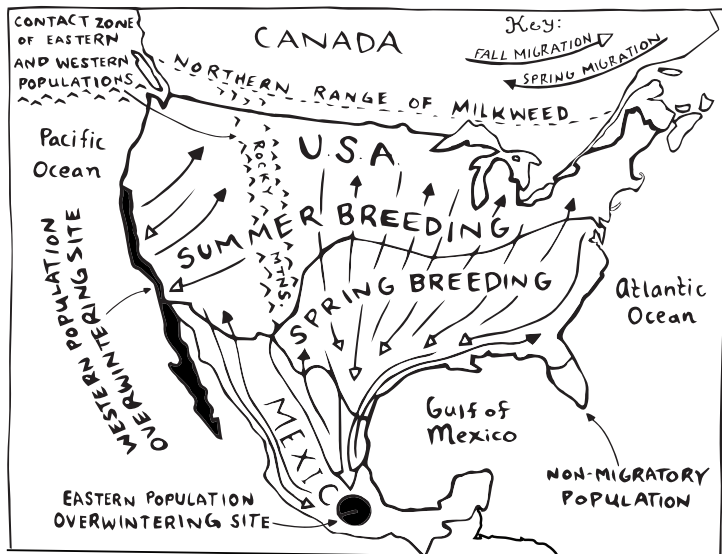
MONARCH BUTTERFLY

Danaus plexippus



BUTTERFLY WEED

Asclepias tuberosa



Can you trace the migration path of the Monarch?

Check out these citizen science initiatives:

TheMonarchJointVenture.org

[Monarchs Across Georgia \(www.ealliance.org/monarchs-across-ga\)](http://Monarchs Across Georgia (www.ealliance.org/monarchs-across-ga)).

Avocado Toast with Alfalfa Sprouts

Servings: 2

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

1 ripe avocado

2 slices of bread of your choice

Salt and pepper to taste

Alfalfa sprouts



Instructions:

1. Toast the bread in a toaster or on a greased skillet.
2. Halve the avocado, remove the pit, and scoop the avocado flesh into a bowl.
3. Smash the avocado and spread it on the toast.
4. Sprinkle the toast with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Top it off with a few pinches (or a lot) of alfalfa sprouts.

Try sprouting your own alfalfa seeds at home and try to use organic seed when possible.

Monarch butterflies migrate in the fall and spring every year. The eastern population starts its journey south near Canada. Four generations of Monarchs later, it reaches southern Mexico to stay for the winter. The other migratory population lives west of the Rocky Mountains, and these Monarchs fly to the coasts of California and western Mexico. Along the way, Monarchs stop by meadows, roadsides, and gardens to lay their eggs and sip nectar for energy that helps sustain their long journey. Although Monarch butterflies are not as picky with nectar flowers, their caterpillars feed only on milkweed species, such as Butterfly Weed. The female Monarch butterfly will only lay her eggs on milkweed plants, locating them with sensory organs on her feet. This ensures her caterpillars will have the proper nutrition. Milkweed leaves are filled with a white, poisonous sap that prevents most insects from feeding on them. However, Monarch caterpillars are able to eat the leaves and absorb the toxic compounds into their bodies, making them taste bad to birds that would otherwise snack on caterpillars.

Much of the Monarch's habitat along its migration path has been converted to farmland. Usually, this involves clearing native vegetation and replacing it with one crop. This type of large-scale farm is also known as a **monoculture**. Alfalfa, which was first domesticated in the Mediterranean region, is one of many monoculture crops grown in the United States. It is grown as a nutritious feed for livestock, and the seeds are sprouted as a healthy addition to sandwiches and salads. Alfalfa is rich in nectar and attracts many different insects such as bees and butterflies. Alfalfa relies on insect **pollination** (mostly by bees) for seed production. Monarchs may stop by alfalfa fields along their migration path when their profuse purple blossoms are open. Unfortunately, the widespread use of **herbicides** around crops such as alfalfa can kill the Monarch's host and nectar plants. Without a place to feed and lay eggs, Monarchs have trouble reproducing and migrating to their winter home in Mexico. The decline in Monarch populations demands a change in agricultural practices and an active conservation effort by people like you. You can grow sources of nectar like goldenrods and coneflowers, as well as Monarch caterpillar **host plants** (milkweed species) so that Monarchs can continue to return to our gardens every year.