

Mersey Tobeatie Research Institute has tips to protect the Monarch Butterfly

The Monarch Butterfly will soon be returning to Nova Scotia from Mexico.

The Mersey Tobeatie Research Institute wants gardeners, butterfly lovers and people interested in volunteering to help increase awareness of the butterflys and their declining population.

"Local factors that can affect the Monarch species are pesticide and herbicide use on nectaring plants and limited Monarch habitat in Nova Scotia," says Connie Jefferson of Hebbleville, who has a registered Monarch Waystation on her property and is a Bridgewater Garden Club member and avid gardener. MTRTI says in a news release that it has taken the initiative to inform and involve the public about conservation efforts to help the species to thrive again by spreading information about Monarchs and helping to increase their habitat locally.

The society says a good way to get involved is by becoming a Butterfly Club member. For just \$10.00, members receive a kit with information on the Monarch Butterfly; tips and tricks on how to create chemical-free habitat, how to spot Monarchs and report sightings, and two Swamp Milkweed plants (or a packet of seeds).

Milkweed is essential for the Monarchs'



Curtline 0A-A19-27072015monarch.jpeg The Monarch Butterfly travels from Mexico to Nova Scotia every year, and milkweed is crucial to its survival.

survival: it acts as both a host plant for its eggs and larvae as well as a main food source. The plant's leaves contain a chem-

ical that, when consumed by the monarch caterpillars, will build up over time and make them toxic to predators who may

ingest them.

The institute says there is a perceived negativity about Common Milkweed because it spreads quite easily and is often eradicated from gardens. It is more suited to have growing in fields, meadows and open spaces where it can be allowed to spread and provide a substantial amount of habitat.

At MTRTI, Swamp Milkweed is provided as a resource because it is a non-noxious weed but still a great source of habitat for Monarchs.

"Swamp Milkweed is a plant that will put its energy into bulking up rather than spreading itself" says Carter Feltham, MTRTI Researcher Assistant. "It produces small purple flowers and is beautiful to mix in your flowerbeds with other nectaring species to make a butterfly-friendly garden".

People interested in becoming a member or learning more, can contact MTRTI at 902-682-2371 or info@merseytobeatie.ca. For more information people can visit the society's visit website at www.merseytobeatie.ca or check out the Butterfly Club Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MonarchButterflyClub>.