**A Fact Sheet by the Marin Monarch Working Group**

Thank you for your interest in supporting monarchs and other pollinators! The western monarch population has decreased precipitously in recent years due to climate change, pesticides, disease, and habitat loss. Nursery customers are becoming more aware of the importance of planting CA native plants that support native wildlife, and they are seeking out and supporting nurseries that sell native milkweeds and native nectar plants. By following these best management practices, you and your customers can play a vital role in stewarding healthy habitat for pollinators throughout our region.

**Monarchs need milkweed . . . and more!**

✅ **Sell pesticide-free CA native milkweeds and nectar plants.**

* Monarchs depend on milkweeds to complete their life cycle. Milkweed is the monarch’s host plant—the only plants they lay their eggs on. Monarch caterpillars eat the leaves, which make the insects unpalatable to predators.
* The milkweeds that are best suited for Marin County are California Milkweed (*Asclepias californica*), Narrow Leaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*), and Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*).
* To select native nectar plants that are appropriate for our region and attractive to monarchs and other pollinators, refer to helpful tools such as [Calscape.org](https://calscape.org/) and the Xerces Society’s California [Monarch Nectar Plants](https://xerces.org/sites/default/files/publications/19-046_01_MonarchNectarPlants_California_web-3pg.pdf) guide. When purchasing seed or deciding on a seed vendor/grower, inquire as to where the CA native seed originated. Seed from your local area will do better than seed from other locations.
* Ensure your milkweeds and nectar plants are not treated with pesticides, particularly systemic ones like neonicotinoids. Plants treated with neonicotinoids and other pesticides can kill monarchs that try to use the plants as hosts or as a food source.

🚫 **Do not sell tropical milkweed.**

* Tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) is not native to CA, and unlike native milkweed species, does not die back in winter. This means that diseases harmful to monarch butterflies, such as the parasite OE, can persist on its evergreen leaves and infect future monarch generations. Tropical milkweed can also confuse monarchs into breeding when they should be overwintering.
* The CA Department of Food and Agriculture has recently designated tropical milkweed as a B-rated noxious weed. Tropical milkweed is no longer allowed to

be sold in nurseries in Marin County.

✅ **Not selling tropical milkweed doesn’t have to mean lost sales.**

* Customers seeking tropical milkweed tend to care about monarchs and providing signage and literature about why you don’t sell tropical milkweed shows that your nursery cares, too.
* If native milkweed isn’t available or customers don’t like it, suggest multiple native nectar plants they can purchase instead, and remind them that monarchs and all pollinators need these plants, too. The additional choices might just result in increased sales given the numerous purchasing opportunities!

For more information, visit these helpful websites:

[xerces.org](https://xerces.org/) UC Marin Master Gardeners at [marinmg.ucanr.edu](https://marinmg.ucanr.edu/) [pollinatorposse.org](https://pollinatorposse.org/)

SPAWN Native Plant Nursery at [seaturtles.org/native-plant-nursery](https://seaturtles.org/native-plant-nursery/)

or email the Marin Monarch Working Group at [marinmonarchwg@gmail.com](mailto:marinmonarchwg@gmail.com)