

# CREATING MONARCH AND POLLINATOR HABITAT

in Southeastern Canada



## Choosing and Ordering a Seed Mix

Native seed mixes provide a mixture of native grasses and wildflowers. The grasses help give structure and establish the site, while the wildflowers should provide nectar through the entire season. Ideally, choose a mix that only contains species native to your area and that has at least one locally occurring species of milkweed (*Asclepias* sp.). In eastern Canada, Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) is the most commonly occurring milkweed species, while Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*) is more common in the western provinces.

Custom mixes can be ordered at a higher cost. To choose species appropriate for your area, check the Planting Guide\* for your region, developed by Pollinator Partnership. You can use this list, combined with a local plant checklist, to make sure you select local species. Finally, order the seeds from the supplier as early as possible — six months ahead for large orders of 10 kilograms or more. Note that supplies of some species are limited.

For a well-prepared dry site, ideal seeding rates range from four to 10 kilograms per hectare. Native seed mix is fairly expensive: typical mixes cost \$100 to \$200 per kilogram.

Another economical option is to collect your own native seed from sites nearby. Although this takes a bit of time and expertise, it is very enjoyable. The Xerces Society has developed a guide with clear instructions – Collecting and Using Your Own Wildflower Seed\*. Another option is to purchase a mix and supplement it with additional species collected locally or swapped with neighbours. It is best to start early to collect a diversity of seed through at least one season.

## Planting Your Site

Sites can be seeded in spring or fall, although fall seeding is usually preferred because some species will germinate and develop sooner. Typical dates for a fall planting are from mid-October to late November. In southeastern Canada, spring plantings should ideally be completed in mid to late May. For best results, make sure your site is weed-free and firmly packed, with a smooth surface to ensure the best possible seed-to-soil contact. To help distribute costly native seed thinly and evenly, mix it with an inexpensive annual volume thinner, such as millet or oats, at a rate of 10 kilograms per hectare.



For residential sites, seeds can be broadcast or scattered onto the soil. Planted sites can then be packed with a lawn roller or a clean ATV or tractor to press the seed into the soil.

## Managing Your Site

Watering and fertilizing your site should not be necessary. If you planted plugs, they may need watering in times of drought. Watch for germination of weed plants and remove them before flowering and setting seed. Over the long term, only mow your new meadow with clean equipment, every two years at most. Rotating the mown area will help promote recolonization. Burning is another way to regenerate a native meadow or prairie; check local regulations for more information.

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\*For these resources and more, visit [HelpTheMonarchs.ca](http://HelpTheMonarchs.ca)