

Raising Monarchs notes from Beaver Creek Reserve February 6, 2016

Only 2% of Monarch eggs will make it to butterflies in the wild due to predators; you can help.

It takes one month for a Monarch to develop from an egg to butterfly. The egg will hatch in 3-5 days into a tiny caterpillar. They have 5 stages of growing & shedding their skins. It takes 5 minutes for the caterpillar to make its chrysalis and then it will emerge in about 10 days, usually in the morning. They need some time to pump blood into their wings and then can be released in a wind sheltered place near nectar plants.

Use an ice cream bucket with the center of the lid cut out and a 1 foot square of vinyl/plastic window screen (NOT metal screening). Clean the bucket daily to remove the frass (poop) with a 10% bleach solution and then wipe dry. Keep the bucket dry, the caterpillars do not need any water. They do need fresh common milkweed leaves each day. The caterpillar will attach itself to the screening to make a chrysalis. You do not need to clean the bucket or add fresh leaves once the caterpillar is in the chrysalis stage.

To collect eggs (June-August), take the whole leaf from a plant and put another leaf over the egg side and place in a baggie until it is transferred into a bucket (think egg sandwich). You can raise 4 butterflies in each bucket. Do not touch the eggs or tiny caterpillars because they are very fragile. You can choose to just finish raising a caterpillar for a shorter and easier method. When caterpillars are larger, cut milkweed stems with 2-3 leaves for daily feeding.

Do not use pesticides near native flowers and flower gardens. Butterflies need nectar from native wildflowers like milkweed, Joe Pye weed. They also like tall zinnias, single petaled.

For more information go to: monarchwatch.org

To watch their migration, visit: journeynorth.org or learner.org