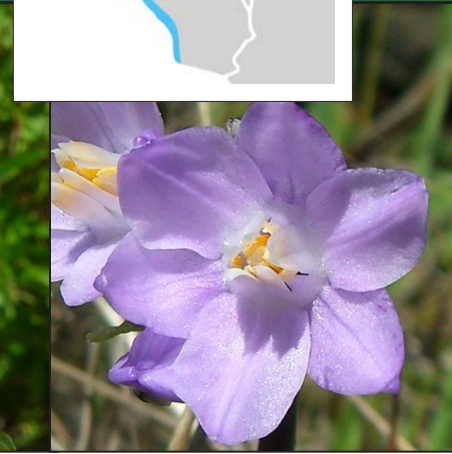
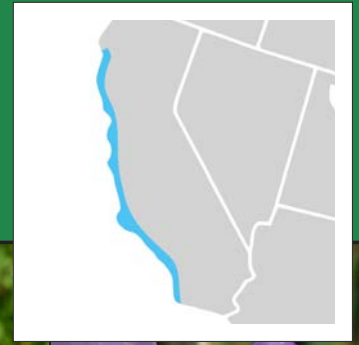


## MONARCH NECTAR PLANTS

# California Coast



Left to right: Monarch on western goldentop, black sage, and bluebirds.

Stretching over 800 miles along the Pacific Ocean, the California coast is home to a diverse array of habitats, including shifting sand dunes, coastal prairies, oak woodlands, towering redwood forests, and estuarine wetlands. The winter homes of monarch butterflies can also be found in this region, in the form of hundreds of small eucalyptus and conifer groves. During spring and summer, monarchs leave these overwintering sites and fan out across the western landscape to breed and lay eggs on milkweed, the monarch's host plant. Several generations are likely produced during this time. In the fall, adults from throughout the western U.S. migrate back to overwintering sites in California and central Mexico, where they generally remain in reproductive diapause until the spring, when the cycle begins again.

Monarchs at overwintering sites in California and Mexico have declined dramatically since monitoring began in the late 1990s. The Xerces Society's Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count, a volunteer driven effort, has documented a 74% decline in monarchs that overwinter in California since 1997. Across their range in North America, monarchs are threatened by a variety of factors. Loss of milkweed from extensive herbicide use has been a major contributing factor, and habitat loss and degradation from other causes, natural disease and predation, climate change, and widespread insecticide use are probably also contributing to declines. Because of the monarch's migratory life cycle, it is important to protect and restore habitat across their entire range. Adult monarchs depend on diverse nectar sources for

food during all stages of the year, from spring and summer breeding to fall migration and overwintering. Caterpillars are completely dependent on their milkweed host plants. Inadequate milkweed or nectar plant food sources at any point may impact the number of monarchs that successfully arrive at overwintering sites in the fall.

Providing nectar-rich flowers that bloom from fall through early spring is one of the most significant actions you can take to support monarch butterfly populations along the California coast. This guide features coastal California native plants that have documented monarch visitation, bloom during the times of year when monarchs are present, are commercially available as seeds or transplants, and are known to be hardy. The list also includes moisture requirements, so that you can choose plants to create a drought-tolerant monarch garden, if needed. These species are well-suited for wildflower gardens, urban greenspaces, and farm field borders. Beyond supporting monarchs, many of these plants attract other nectar- and/or pollen-seeking butterflies, bees, moths, and hummingbirds, and some are host plants for other butterfly and moth caterpillars. For a list of native plants that host butterflies and moths specific to your zip code see [www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder](http://www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder).

The species in this guide will be adaptable to growing conditions across most of coastal California, although a few species have limited distributions. Please consult Calflora ([www.calflora.org](http://www.calflora.org)) for details on species' distributions in your specific area.

Bloom		Common Name	Scientific Name	Flower Color	Max. Height	Water Needs
		<b>Forbs</b>			(Feet)	Low, Medium or High
Spring to Fall	1	Coastal sand verbena	<i>Abronia latifolia</i>	Yellow	1	L/M
	2	California goldenrod	<i>Solidago velutina</i> ssp. <i>californica</i>	Yellow	3	L
Summer to Fall	3	Common sandaster	<i>Corethrogyne filaginifolia</i>	Yellow/purple	3	L/M
	4	Dunn's lobelia	<i>Lobelia dunnii</i> var. <i>serrata</i>	Purple	2	H
	5	Roughleaf aster	<i>Eurybia radulina</i>	Purple	2	M
	6	Sweetscent	<i>Pluchea odorata</i>	Pink/purple	3	L
	7	Western goldentop	<i>Euthamia occidentalis</i>	Yellow	6	M/H
Winter to Spring	8	Bluedicks	<i>Dichelostemma capitatum</i>	Purple	3	L
Winter to Summer	9	Seaside fleabane	<i>Erigeron glaucus</i>	Purple	2	L/M
<b>Shrubs and Trees</b>						
Spring to Summer	10	Black sage	<i>Salvia mellifera</i>	Blue/purple	6	L
	11	Blueblossom	<i>Ceanothus thyrsiflorus</i>	Blue	15	L
Spring to Fall	12	Dune ragwort	<i>Senecio blochmaniae</i>	Yellow	3	L/M
Summer to Fall	13	California broomsage	<i>Lepidospartum squamatum</i>	Yellow	6	L/M
	14	Saltmarsh baccharis	<i>Baccharis douglasii</i>	White	3	M/H
Fall	15	California goldenbush	<i>Ericameria ericoides</i>	Yellow	3	L/M
Fall to Winter	16	Coyotebrush	<i>Baccharis pilularis</i>	Yellow/white	8	L
Fall to Summer	17	Bladderpod spiderflower	<i>Cleome isomeris</i>	Yellow	4	L
Winter	18	Desertbroom	<i>Baccharis sarothroides</i>	Pink/white	10	L
Winter to Spring	19	Arroyo willow	<i>Salix lasiolepis</i>	Yellow/white	20	H
	20	Hollyleaf cherry	<i>Prunus ilicifolia</i>	Yellow/white	14	L
	21	Morro manzanita	<i>Arctostaphylos morroensis</i>	Pink/white	20	L
	22	Refugio manzanita	<i>Arctostaphylos refugioensis</i>	White	7	L
	23	Sugar sumac	<i>Rhus integrifolia</i>	Pink	8	L/M
Winter to Summer	24	California brittlebush	<i>Encelia californica</i>	Yellow	4	L/M
13	14	15	16	17	18	





## Notes

All species are perennials. Monarchs are typically present in coastal California from September through March, but can be found year-round in some parts of the region.

Tolerates salt spray and prefers sandy soils. Can bloom year-round.

Important late-season forage for bees, butterflies, wasps, beetles, and more.

Host plant for Gabb's checkerspot (*Chlosyne gabbii*).

Excellent butterfly plant.

High drought tolerance once established.

Mostly coastal, brackish plant. Can tolerate saline sites.

Wetland-riparian.

Attracts other bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. An early spring bloomer.

A great butterfly plant.

Important butterfly and hummingbird plant. Quail eat the seeds.

Amazing pollinator plant. Host plant to many butterfly species. Birds will eat the seeds.

Limited distribution.

Can be used in restoration and stream stabilization projects.

Important nectar source for many species of wasps, butterflies, and flies.

Great late season nectar source for bees and butterflies.

Easy to grow and extremely drought-tolerant. Attractive to many insects.

Tolerates salt spray. Also attracts bees.

Can be used for streambank stabilization.

Tolerates sand and seasonal flooding; good for erosion control. Important wildlife plant.

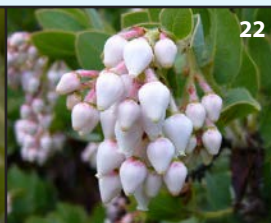
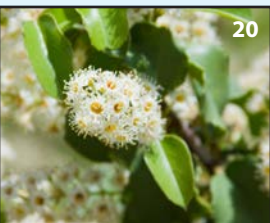
Fruits eaten by many birds and small mammals.

Limited distribution. On CA rare/threatened/endangered list.

Limited distribution. On CA rare/threatened/endangered list.

Good for erosion control on coastal bluffs. Fruits are eaten by birds and other wildlife.

Tolerates salt spray. Can be used to stabilize slopes. Good bee and butterfly plant.



## Planting for Success

Monarch nectar plants often do best in open, sunny sites. You can attract more monarchs by planting flowers in single species clumps and choosing a variety of plants that have overlapping and sequential bloom periods. Monarchs are typically present from September through March in coastal California, but can be present year-round. Providing nectar plants that bloom from fall through early spring will be important for overwintering monarchs in the region.

### Why Plant Native?

Although monarchs use a variety of nectar plant species, including exotic invasives such as ice plant and cape ivy, we recommend planting native species. Native plants are often more beneficial to ecosystems, are adapted to local soils and climates, and help promote biological diversity. They can also be easier to maintain in the landscape, once established.

Tropical milkweed is a non-native plant that is widely available in nurseries. This milkweed can persist year-round in mild climates, allowing monarchs to breed throughout the winter rather than going into diapause. Tropical milkweed may foster higher loads of a monarch parasite called *Oe* (*Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*), which negatively impacts monarch health. Because of these implications, the Xerces Society does not recommend planting milkweed adjacent to overwintering sites or in areas where the plant did not historically occur. You can read more about *Oe* in a fact sheet by the Monarch Joint Venture: [http://monarchjointventure.org/images/uploads/documents/Oe\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://monarchjointventure.org/images/uploads/documents/Oe_fact_sheet.pdf).

## Protect Monarchs from Pesticides

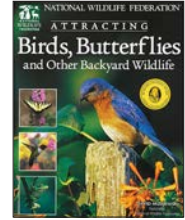
Both insecticides and herbicides can be harmful to monarchs. Herbicides can reduce floral resources and host plants. Although dependent on timing, rate, and method of application, most insecticides have the potential to poison or kill monarchs and other pollinators. Systemic insecticides, including neonicotinoids, have received significant attention for their potential role in pollinator declines (imidacloprid, dinotefuran, clothianidin, and thiamethoxam are examples of systemic insecticides now found in various farm and garden products). Because plants absorb systemic insecticides as they grow, the chemicals become distributed throughout all plant tissues, including the leaves and nectar. New research has shown that some neonicotinoids are toxic to monarch caterpillars that are poisoned as they feed on leaf tissue of treated plants. You can help protect monarchs by avoiding the use of these and other insecticides. Before purchasing plants from nurseries and garden centers, be sure to ask whether they have been treated with systemic insecticides. To read more about threats to pollinators from pesticides, please visit: [www.xerces.org/pesticides](http://www.xerces.org/pesticides).

## Additional Resources

### Gardening for Butterflies



### Attracting Birds, Butterflies, and Other Backyard Wildlife



Available through [www.xerces.org/books](http://www.xerces.org/books) and <http://bit.ly/1Xhxfgu>.

### Conservation Status and Ecology of the Monarch Butterfly in the U.S. Report

[www.xerces.org/us-monarch-consv-report](http://www.xerces.org/us-monarch-consv-report)

### Guide to Milkweeds and Monarchs in the Western U.S.

[www.xerces.org/western-us-monarch-guide](http://www.xerces.org/western-us-monarch-guide)

### Review of Laws and Regulations Affecting California Monarch Habitat

[www.xerces.org/ca-monarch-legal-status](http://www.xerces.org/ca-monarch-legal-status)

### Milkweed Seed Finder

[www.xerces.org/milkweed-seed-finder](http://www.xerces.org/milkweed-seed-finder)

## Websites

The Xerces Society [www.xerces.org/monarchs](http://www.xerces.org/monarchs)

### Monarch Joint Venture

[www.monarchjointventure.org/resources](http://www.monarchjointventure.org/resources)

### Natural Resources Conservation Service

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/monarchs](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/monarchs)

National Wildlife Federation [www.nwf.org/butterflies](http://www.nwf.org/butterflies)

## Citizen Science Efforts in California

### Xerces Society Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count

[www.westernmonarchcount.org](http://www.westernmonarchcount.org)

### Xerces Society & USFWS Milkweed and Monarch Survey

[www.xerces.org/milkweedsurvey](http://www.xerces.org/milkweedsurvey)

Journey North [www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch](http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch)

Monarch Larva Monitoring Project [www.mlmp.org](http://www.mlmp.org)

Project Monarch Health [www.monarchparasites.org](http://www.monarchparasites.org)

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