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# Create a Monarch GARDEN

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The beautiful monarch – almost all of us know this amazing butterfly and marvel at its annual migration to Mexico.

But many of us may not know that the monarch is classified as a species of “special concern” under Canada’s Species at Risk Act, faced with the loss of summer habitat and host plants in Canada to

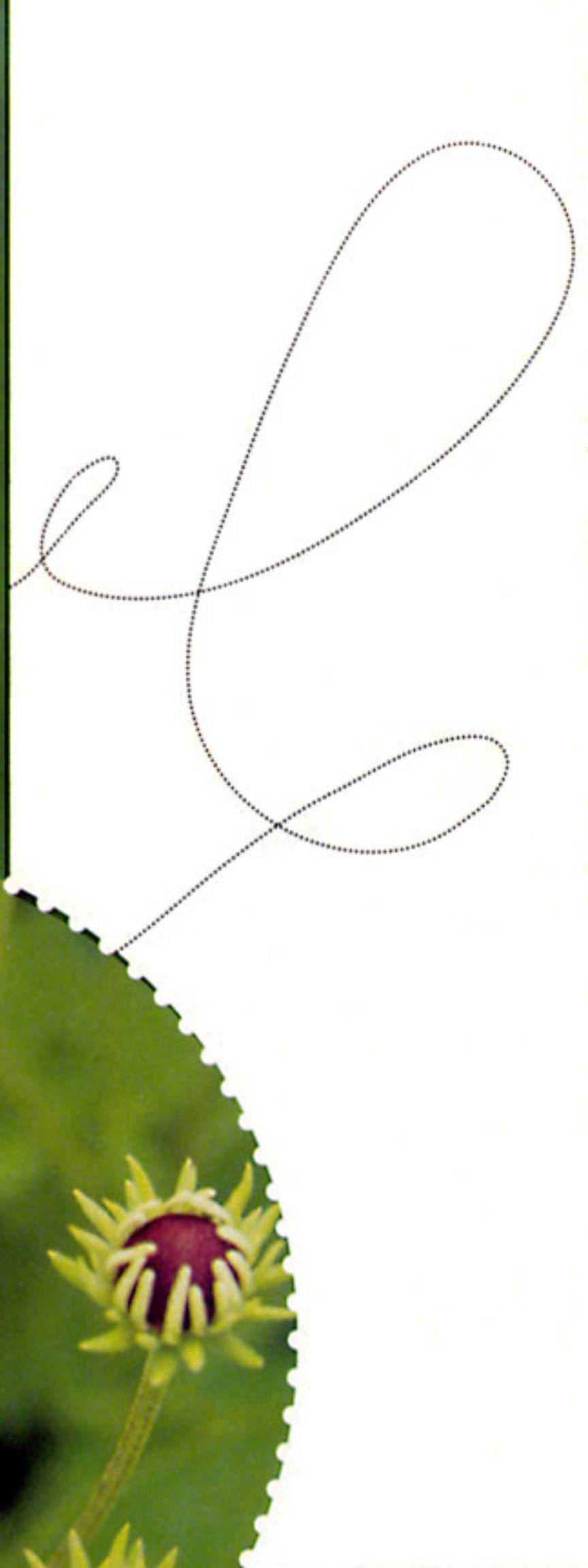
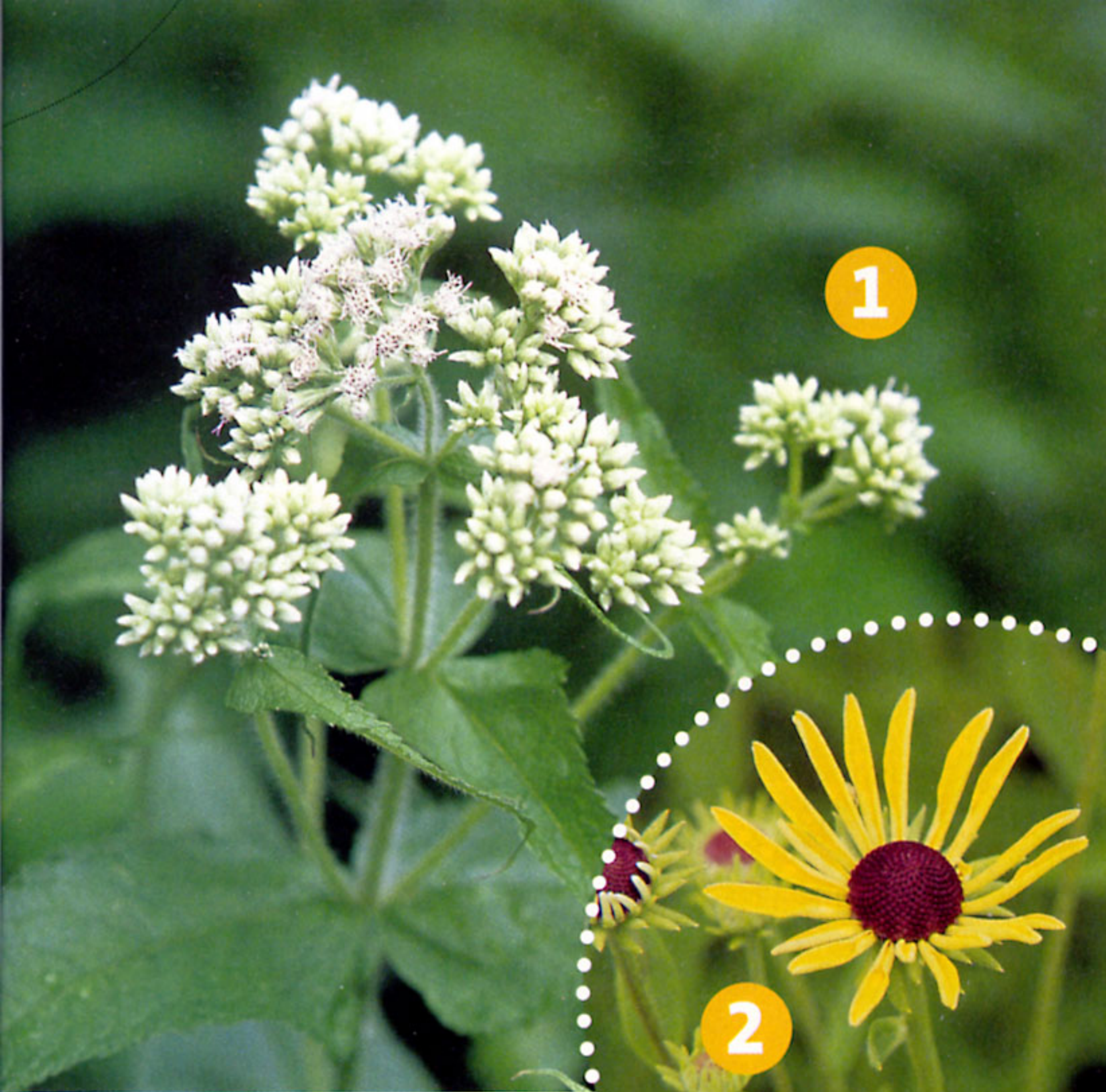
stepped-up urbanization and herbicide use. Luckily, backyard gardeners can help provide monarchs with places to breed and feed. Even in a city, a small stand of milkweed and a few nectar-rich flowering plants can boost their chances. And since these monarch-friendly plants are native to North America, they’re naturally low-maintenance – so gardeners like them, too. Here’s how to get started.

➤ **Swear off herbicides and pesticides.**

➤ **Set aside a spot for your monarch garden.** Choose a site that gets sun almost all day long and has shrubs or trees nearby to offer protection from wind and predators.

➤ **Provide food for the larvae.** Milkweeds (*Asclepias*) are a must: Monarchs lay their eggs on the underside of the leaves, so the emerging larvae are surrounded by their only food source. Note: The sap of these plants is toxic to animals, so sow your milkweeds





at the back of the flowerbed, out of the reach of pets and children (monarch larvae and butterflies store this toxin as a protection against predators).

**Poke milkweed** (*Asclepias exaltata*) is usually found in woodlands and has white flowers that bloom in June and July. It needs part sun and moist soil, and grows up to 1.8 metres tall.

**Swamp milkweed** (*Asclepias incarnata*) is a wetland plant with pink flower clusters that bloom from late June through August. It needs full sun and grows up to 1.5 metres tall.

**Common milkweed** (*Asclepias syriaca*) is drought-tolerant. Its pink-to-lavender-to-white flowers bloom from June through early August. It needs full sun, grows up to 1.8 metres tall and can be invasive.

**Butterfly milkweed** (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is a drought-tolerant plant with showy flowers that range from yellow through orange to red, and bloom from June through August. It needs part to full sun and grows up to 90 centimetres tall.

**➤ Offer nectar plants for the butterflies.**

Start with these six flowering plants recommended by Nature Canada ([www.naturecanada.ca](http://www.naturecanada.ca)).

**1. Boneset** (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*) produces clusters of white flowers all summer long. It needs moist soil and full sun, and grows up to 1.2 metres tall.

**2. Black-eyed Susan** (*Rudbeckia hirta*) opens its familiar deep yellow flowers all season long. A Prairie plant, it does best in moist soil and full sun, and grows up to 90 centimetres tall.

**3. New England aster** (*Aster novae-angliae*) has vibrant, yellow-centred purple flowers that bloom in August ▶







and September. It prefers rich soil and full sun, and grows up to 1.8 metres tall.

**4. Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*)** will grow in moist or dry soils and produce arching plumes of yellow flowers throughout the summer. Goldenrod grows up to 1.5 metres tall in part to full sun (and, no, it does not cause hay fever).

**5. Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)** flowers in white and yellow clusters from June to August. It thrives in rich, moist soil and full sun, and grows up to 90 centimetres tall.

**6. Wild bergamot, bee balm (*Monarda fistulosa*)** is a drought-tolerant plant that sports clusters of purple flowers from July through August. It thrives in rich soil and full sun, and grows up to one metre tall.

➤ **Make a butterfly watering hole.**

Set a wide terra-cotta saucer filled with clean, moist sand in a sunny spot.

➤ **Pat yourself on the back.**

The nectar-rich native plants that feed monarchs also provide food to bees and other pollinating insects – now at risk as well – that humans depend upon for the production of one-third of the food we eat. Learn more at the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign ([www.nappc.org](http://www.nappc.org)). ●

**IF YOU'RE A TEACHER**

You can find out more about teaching and learning about monarch butterflies, both inside and outside the classroom, at [www.monarchcanada.org](http://www.monarchcanada.org), and become part of the Monarch Teacher Network. Check out Hinterland Who's Who at [www.hww.ca](http://www.hww.ca) and visit [www.biodiversityonline.ca/schoolgrounds](http://www.biodiversityonline.ca/schoolgrounds) to learn how to naturalize your school yard.