



FYN Garden Q & A Series

Thomas Becker
Extension Agent, Florida
Yards & Neighborhoods



Topic: Tagged Monarch Butterflies

Question: I have seen monarch butterflies in my garden all winter. Is this unusual behavior? How can I help spot or tag monarchs in my garden? D. G. Ft Myers.

Answer. Currently, there is a lack of knowledge about Florida's monarch butterfly population, especially in SWFL where their migratory behavior needs studied.. Questions abound even among local butterfly experts.

Do they migrate to Mexico or to the Caribbean Islands? If so, when? Some local experts contend that SWFL monarchs are struggling. A possible reason cited is, its host plant is now common here. Monarch caterpillars consume the leaves of the non-native, scarlet milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*). Warm temperatures kept scarlet milkweed growing all winter. Experts would like to know how this non-native milkweed might affect migrating monarch populations seen here. Does the presence of this milkweed species enable monarchs to stay put in SWFL year-round when they would otherwise migrate to Mexico or further south? How might this be detrimental to the monarchs health and reproduction? Here's how you can help.

If you live anywhere in SW Florida and happen upon a tagged monarch, please report it to Lee County Master Gardener, Gayle Edwards at flmonarch@gmail.com or call 239-826-4103. Any information you supply is greatly appreciated— date, time, tag color, shape, tag number, location and the name of the nectar plants being used etc.. Others can do more by learning to properly tag monarch butterflies traversing your yard. To learn more, go to: http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsAZ/SFMMP_Instruction_Form.pdf.

Two final thoughts: From Gayle, "It is fascinating to sit and watch them dip, dive and flutter for long periods without nectaring." Another from local expert, Nick Bodvin. "Visit a public butterfly garden like ones at Manatee, Rutenberg or Terry Park. Photograph each monarch while they rest or nectaring flowers. Keep checking for the monarch tags." The first tagged butterfly sighting is still to come. Stay tuned.....

Useful Links

<http://www.floridayards.org>

<http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>



Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M. 02/25/2012.

