

Milkweeds for Monarchs

Due to the drastic decline in the population of the Monarch butterfly, the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative (OPHI) is seeking public involvement to collect and drop off common and swamp milkweed seed pods from established plants, Sept.1 through Oct. 30 at collection stations around the state. The seeds will be used to establish new plantings and create additional habitat for the Monarch butterfly throughout Ohio in the coming years.

“Common and swamp milkweed is essential to the survival of Monarch Butterflies in Ohio,” said Marci Lininger, biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “Ohio is a priority area for Monarchs. This generation of Monarchs is also responsible for starting the life cycle all over again in the spring, and laying the following year’s first generation of Monarchs in late summer”

“Most Ohio counties have a Milkweed Pod Collection Station – most of them being located at the local Soil and Water Conservation District office,” said Lori Stevenson, Ohio Private Lands coordinator with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To find the location of your local SWCD office:

<http://www.agri.ohio.gov/divs/SWC/SearchLocalSWCD.aspx> or for a list of participating Soil and Water Conservation Districts visit www.ofswcd.org. In Summit County, the milkweed pod collection site is located at the Ohio State University Extension Office, 1100 Graham Road Circle, Stow, Ohio, 44224, and is easily accessible from the freeway exit.

Seed pods from common or swamp milkweed should be collected when the pods are dry and gray or brown in color. If the center seam pops with gentle pressure, they can be picked. It is best to collect pods into paper bags or paper grocery sacks. Avoid using plastic bags because they can attract moisture and allow mold to develop. Store seeds in a cool, dry area until you can deliver to the closest pod collection area. It is recommended to wear disposable gloves when picking and handling pods. Harvesting seed pods from milkweed plants will not have any effect on the population of milkweed in established areas.

OPHI was formed in response to the 2014 petition to list the Monarch butterfly as federally endangered. Its partners include state of Ohio agencies, universities, corporations, and non-profit organizations.

OPHI’s mission is to inform citizens, landowners, farmers, and government agencies of the importance of pollinators and the habitat they need to survive. Members of the initiative are a core group of professionals that provide education, outreach, and technical assistance to all that have an interest in pollinators and protecting our food supply.

For more information on OPHI or the seed pod collection, contact OPHI at (614) 416-8993 or your local Summit County SWCD office at 330-926-2452.