

Pollinator Pocket Facts

A Celebration of Nature

By Jim Fay

The majority of this information comes from the *Illinois Wildflowers* web site at www.illinoiswildflowers.info.

USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) designations are used instead of Latin scientific names.

Black-Eyed Susan High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] Minor source of winter seed for finches which eat and may disperse them. Monarchs can perceive the ultraviolet nectar color of these and other plants, colors we cannot perceive. A very popular urban landscape flower.

Bluejacket The most important pollinators of the flowers are bees, especially bumblebees. Also flies and butterflies.

Butterfly Milkweed Very High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] Host to bees, wasps, butterflies and hummingbirds for the nectar. Various insects and/or their larvae feed on other parts of the plant. Monarch caterpillars must have milkweed leaves to survive.

Common milkweed Very High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] The nectar attracts bees, wasps, flies, skippers and butterflies. Monarch caterpillars must have milkweed leaves to survive. The toxicity of the milkweed sap makes many of the insect feeders toxic to predators as well as brightly colored, a characteristic the potential consumers of these insects note and therefore avoid.

Compass Plant High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] Compass plant gets its name because the leaves tend to face east and west to minimize the hot sun from the south. That means these leaf widths point north/south.

Pollinators include bees, flies, and butterflies. Beetles, wasps and aphids feed on other facets of the plant. The plant may live to 100 years old. Root depth to 16' according to NRCS. To 12' tall. [4]

Culver's Root High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] Host to bees, butterflies, wasps, moths and flies. Worker bumblebees spread the pollen. Caterpillars of butterflies, moths, and weevils feed on parts of the plant. The adult weevils feed on the leaves and flowers while the larvae eat the seed.

Cup Plant High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] Hosts to many bees and butterflies; hollow thick square stems make extraordinary hosts for certain bees nests [2] May live to 100 years. Major source of winter seed for finches which eat and may disperse them. May have roots 15' deep. To 10' tall. [4]

Eastern Purple Conefl. Very High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] Host to bees and butterflies, including honeybees and bumblebees. The flower heads are hosts to several moth caterpillars. Minor source of winter seed for Eastern Goldfinches which eat and may disperse them. A popular modern herbal cough medicine. A very popular urban landscape flower.

Field thistle Very High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] A nearly extinct but important resource for butterflies and bumble bees [2] (Not currently a part of the pocket)

Great blue lobelia An extraordinary host to bumble bees [2] Occasional host to humming birds, large butterflies, and certain bees. The seeds are too small to be of interest to birds.

Lanceleaf tickseed An early bloomer that hosts bees, butterflies, wasps, flies, skippers, moths, and beetles. Goldfinches sometimes eat the seeds. A valuable component to quality prairies.

New England Aster A late fall-blooming plants; host to honey bees and per-hibernation bumble bee queens [2] The plant requires cross pollination by insects to propagate. Rabbits occasionally eat on the foliage, sometimes consuming the entire plant.

Partridge Pea Host to bees, wasps, flies, ants, and beetles. Sometimes leaf-cutting bees cut off portions of the petals for their nest. Ring-necked pheasants and mallards eat the seeds. A legume that hosts the bacteria that converts atmospheric nitrogen into a biologically useful nitrogen compound and stores this compound in small growths on the roots. Indeed, partridge pea has a very high nitrogen-fixing rate. It attracts predatory or parasite insects that prey upon and kill harmful insects. [5]

Pinnate prairie coneflower Bees, especially bumblebees, are the most important pollinators. Wasps, flies, small butterflies, and beetles are other insect visitors. Goldfinches sometimes eat and disperse the seeds. Very common in most prairies.

Prairie Dock A variety of caterpillars and/or adult insects feed on the various parts of the plant, some of which prey on each other. Hosts hummingbirds. Major source of winter seed for finches which eat and may disperse them. The leaves, like that of compass plant, point north/south. Up to 10' tall. [4]

Prairie Fleabane Attracts predatory or parasite insects that prey upon and kill harmful insects. [5] Over 40 kinds of insects feed on the plant, about half of which are so esoteric they have no common name. [4] Combats the harmful garlic mustard weed.

Prairie Ironweed High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] Major source of very durable winter seed for finches which eat and may disperse them. Durable seeds may remain fertile in the soil for fifty years.

Purple Giant Hyssop Produces long-lasting, nectar-rich flowers [2] Bees are the most common visitors. The flower also attracts goldfinches and hummingbirds. A square stemmed mint.

Purple Prairie Clover Host to voracious honey bees and bumble bees [2] Honey bees waggle dance to communicate to each other a surprisingly precise location of the plant over 3½ miles away.
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU_KD1enR3Q) A legume.

Rattlesnake Master High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] Popular host to an incredible diversity of insects [2] Leaves were used to make sandals 9,000 years ago.

Shooting Star The scientific name for shooting star is *Dodecatheon meadia* meaning "flower of the 12 gods" implying that the flower is so beautiful it was favored and protected by the 12 superior gods of Olympus. Early settlers often referred to it as "the prairie pointer," perhaps referring to the fact that the bloom points down to the soil, or, to be more significant, to the prairie. Queen bumblebees are probably the most common visitors of "prairie pointer" flowers. They rapidly and dramatically vibrate their thoracic muscles to shake pollen loose from the flowers. This tactic for collecting pollen is sometimes called 'buzz pollination.'

Smooth Ox Eye High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] Nectar and pollen is sought by various insects including bees, wasps, flies, butterflies and beetles. A variety of other insects feed on other facets of the plant.

Swamp Milkweed Very High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] A number

of visitors seek the nectar: bees, wasps, flies, butterflies, hummingbirds. Monarch caterpillars are one of the larvae that feed, often destructively, on the leaves.

Showy Goldenrod Very High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] Host to bees, ants, beetles, moths or butterflies. The seeds are sometimes (rather rarely) eaten by the Eastern Goldfinch and the Greater Prairie Chicken.

Stiff Goldenrod Very High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] As popular with Monarchs as common milkweed [3] A popular host for solitary wasps, honey bees, pollen-eating soldier beetles, and many more. Roots up to 15' deep. <<http://www.prairiefreedom.com/pages/families/roots.html>>

Tall Blazingstar AKA rough blazing star. Very High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] According to a (rather questionable) study 80 times as popular with monarchs as common milkweed [3] Hosts a broad variety of butterflies: a "butterfly magnet" [2]

White Wild Indigo Worker bumblebees spread the pollen. Caterpillars of butterflies, moths, and weevils feed on parts of the plant. The adult weevils feed on the leaves and flowers while the larvae eats the seed. A legume.

Wild Bergamot Very High Value Monarch butterfly plant [1] Popular host to hummingbirds, hawk moths, and long-tongued bumble bees [2] A very popular urban landscape flower. Very common in most prairies. A square stemmed mint.

NOTES

[1] "PNRCS Plant Recommendations for Monarch Butterflies" https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_PLANTMATERIALS/publications/cep_mstn12677.pdf

[2] "Xerces Great Lakes Plant List" https://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/GreatLakesPlantList_web.pdf

[3] "Monarch Butterfly Nectar Plant Lists for Conservation Plantings" https://xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-003_01_Monarch-Nectar-Plants-for-Conservation-Plantings_web.pdf (page 14)

[4] "Illinois Wildflowers" <https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/>

[5] "Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center" <https://www.wildflower.org/plants/>

PS: these plants have been planted at the United Methodist Church of Antioch

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