



## Monarch & Pollinator Gardens

### The Flower Fields – Carlsbad, California

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*This is still one of my favorite things to see because it all started with caring for the monarch garden.*

I care for the Monarch Butterfly Garden at The Flower Fields in Carlsbad, California. The garden contains over 120 milkweed plants which are the host plants for the resident population of monarch butterflies in our southern CA area. When I first started here almost 8 years ago, there were only a few flowering plants to help attract the beneficial pollinators that I felt would make for a stronger garden. So, this past summer and fall, I was allowed to start planting on the slopes bordering the milkweed bed. My goal for both gardens is to attract many types of butterflies, bumble bees, honey bees, ladybugs, green lacewings, hover flies, and more.

For the new Pollinator Friendly Garden, I chose to start with basic structural plants that have proven to be favorites of pollinators and birds. *Agapanthus*, *Lantana*, *Polygala fruticosa*, and *Salvias* have been installed, and are already proving to be attractive to bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Perennial and annual plants will be added as weather permits, such as *Verbena bonariensis*, lemon balm, zinnias, fennel, California poppies, nasturtiums, foxgloves, oriental poppies, and more.



*Salvias attract bumble bees, honey bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinators.*

A popcorn cassia plant has been added as a host plant for the many sulphur butterflies we have here and will also provide a great source of nectar and pollen for other pollinators. Two purple passion flower vines are in place as host plants for Gulf fritillary butterflies.

The Flower Fields is an urban flower farm that grows *ranunculus* on 55 acres. The garden I work in is open to the public from March 1<sup>st</sup> to mid-May each year. Besides being able to walk through some beautiful garden settings, one of our goals is to share with visitors information on gardening. The Monarch Garden is within the School Program area where

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school groups come to learn about composting, pollination, the many benefits of insects, and other similar subjects.

## MEET THE POLLINATORS!

**Pollinators move pollen from flower to flower, fertilizing that flower which allows it to produce seeds/fruit.**



**BUMBLEBEES**

- Eggs are laid in a nest usually in the ground, and hatch in about 4 days.
- Larvae are feed pollen by queen bee for 2 weeks.
- Larvae pupate into cocoons for about 2 weeks.
- Adult bumblebees live about 1 – 2 months, depending on their role.
- The queen will continue to lay eggs, and the colony will grow steadily through the summer. At the end of summer, new queens and drones will emerge and mate.

My goal is to introduce both the kids and adults to the life cycles of butterflies and some common pollinators, and more specific ways to attract pollinators in their garden. They learn about the role of the shapes of flowers, their use of color and scent, and the types of insects they may attract. We talk about host plants and nectar plants, the basics of soil science, natural methods of gardening that avoid pesticides, and the joy and restorative nature of gardening. Five “Meet the Pollinators” signs will highlight the life cycle of common pollinators to help visitors recognize the different stages of life they might see on their plants.

I try to impress on visitors that gardens can be as small as a plant in a container, and that can help pollinators too. I also try to share the fact that even ‘other abled’ people can do some kind of gardening, whether in raised beds or containers. I am 68 years old, have had 5 strokes, and struggle with strength and stamina. But slowly, and with many adjustments and a little help, I have enjoyed stretching my mind, body, and spirit doing this work.



*A life cycle sign which will go next to the purple passion flower vine to show visitors how a host plant supports Gulf fritillary butterflies.*

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