

Green Home and Garden Tip #3

**By Green Home and Garden Committee,
Texas Master Naturalist**

Get ready for an invasion!!! With August and September come the big time migration of Monarch butterflies and Ruby throated hummingbirds. Both species are heading South during these months for the winter and now is the time to start turning your yard into a welcoming, well stocked way station. A smorgasbord, if you wish, for the hummers and Monarchs.

Because of all the urban development, homeowners have to step up to the plate and provide habitat (food, water, and shelter) that developers have knocked down, cemented over or destroyed. The biggest factor in attracting wildlife of any sort to your garden is this one cardinal rule: No chemical pesticides!!!! Bad for wildlife and bad for humans. Use natural methods (A shot of water to knock a bug off or pick it off with your hands) and use Integrated Pest Management. Don't start with the nuclear weapons or you could inadvertently kill the very things you are trying to help! Remember that 20% of a humming bird's diet is protein which comes from insects. Remember butterflies and their larvae are insects. Plant nectar rich plants the butterflies and hummers love. Think purple for the butterflies and red for hummingbirds But don't restrict yourself to these colors. These are the colors that get them to look and stop at the smorgasbord you provided. They also like yellow, orange and white. They see big areas of color, so plant in mass to get them to your yard. Plant butterfly weed for the Monarchs, along with Black-eyed Susan, Indian Blanket, and/or purple coneflower. Hummingbirds like tubular flowers like native salvias, cross-vine, coral honeysuckle and Turk's cap. Texas native plants work best. Set up a mister in your yard, hummingbirds need lots of water and love to fly through misting water. If you start enhancing your garden now, the plants should be in great shape for the migration.

When you start planting for the Ruby throats and Monarchs you will also start attracting other butterflies and hummers, some of which will stay here year-round. So keep your garden well stocked with nectar plants and every year you will get more and more visits to the garden. Along with Monarchs; Sulfur, Swallowtail, Gulf fritillary and Skippers are abundant in this area, so plant larval plants for them. That's the plants they lay their eggs on and the caterpillars eat until they are ready to morph into butterflies. Butterfly host plant families include Asclepias (milkweeds for monarchs and queens), Passiflora (passion vines for gulf fritillaries), Apiacae (carrot family such as prairie parsley for black swallowtails, but fennel and dill will work too), and Rutaceae (citrus family such

as hercules club for giant swallowtails) The more you include in your garden the more activity you will get year after year. Isn't that what everyone, especially children, love in a garden?

The Texas Master Naturalists is a group of informed volunteers who are interested in learning about and educating others about the area of Texas where we live and with preserving our natural heritage. We are co-sponsored by the Texas Cooperative Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife. For more information about our group, log on to gcmn.tamu.edu or www.coastalprairie.org.

The Green Home and Garden Workshop is an ongoing project co-sponsored by the Gulf Coast chapter and the Coastal Prairies chapter of Texas Master Naturalists. Our mission is to interest and inform people about safe and eco-friendly ways to garden and maintain their homes. We have a workshop event once a year. The next workshop will be held on February 16, 2008.