

# Habitat for Monarchs

By Pam Flaming



On a brisk, sunny morning in early November, new homeowner Carla watched as several volunteers installed edging, prepared the soil, and planted native vegetation for what would become a Monarch Waystation in her front yard. Many homeowners are planting Waystations to help feed migrating monarchs and to provide host plants for their larvae as they grow and develop into beautiful, mature monarchs. What was different about this Waystation, however, was that it was installed at a Habitat for Humanity house, thanks to a new program developed by Bluestem Master Naturalists, Grayson County Master Gardeners, and Habitat for Humanity.

Called Habitat for Monarchs, the program offers Habitat homeowners the opportunity to have Monarch Waystations in their yards. If they accept, volunteer Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners install the gardens and teach the

homeowners how to maintain them. So far, the program has installed four Monarch Waystations at Habitat houses in Sherman and Denison, according to Linn Cates, leader of the Project.

Grayson County is in the middle of what is called the Monarch Flyway; Monarchs from throughout the eastern and Midwestern states fly south through Texas on their way to Mexico, where they spend the winter. In the spring, Monarchs migrate back to the northern United States, using the same route. During the fall migration, monarchs need nectar to sustain them

on their journey; in the spring, they need host plants on which to lay their eggs. Thus, a Monarch Waystation includes several types of wildflowers and native plants that flower at different times to provide an ongoing source of nectar, as well as milkweed as host plants. Cates explains that it is also important to have some native grasses in the mix, as they provide cover for the butterflies.



Providing Waystations is particularly important for Grayson County at this time. Rapid development has reduced the amount of habitat available for Monarchs and other pollinators.

According to pollinator expert Doug Tallamy, even small suburban gardens can have a significant impact on monarch populations if they contain the right mix of native plants. That is the goal of Habitat for Monarchs—to provide suburban gardens that sustain monarchs that migrate through our area. New homeowner Carla is thrilled to have a waystation. “This is a way I can give back. I love butterflies, and I like the idea of making a good home for them

If you are interested in learning how to build a Monarch Waystation, you can find complete instructions on the Monarch Watch website. If you’d like to help Habitat for Monarchs build more Waystations, please [contact us](#).