

Raising Monarchs

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Monarch & Queen butterfly eggs are white, oblong eggs found on milkweed leaves, and the caterpillars have black, white, and yellow stripes with two or three pairs of "tentacles." Here are some tips for how to raise them!



An egg on milkweed, an egg viewed with a microscope, a newly hatched Queen caterpillar (3 pairs of tentacles), and an older Monarch caterpillar (2 pairs of tentacles)

Hatching Eggs



Snip off the portion of leaf with the egg (so the rest of the leaf lives!) and place it on a damp paper towel in a clean, lidded container. Keep out of direct sunlight and open the container at least once a day to make sure the leaves don't dry out, but that mold doesn't grow. If you have multiple eggs, move caterpillars out of the "nursery," because they will eat unhatched eggs! Otherwise, young caterpillars will happily eat their leaf piece safely in their nursery as long as it is kept clean and free of mold.

Feeding & Housing



As they grow, caterpillars must be moved to larger habitats. The easiest set-up is a potted milkweed, placed inside a pop-up laundry hamper. The next easiest is milkweed cuttings in water, placed inside a critter carrier or aquarium (with a lid). Make sure they cannot climb into the water and drown (you can stuff the water vase with cotton balls). When they need to molt, caterpillars will leave their milkweed plants and make a silk mat on the side of their enclosures. They will spend a day there, slowly climbing out of their old skin, which they will eat when they're done (they leave their old face behind, try to find it)! When they pupate, they will climb to the top of their enclosure, make another silk pad, dangle from it in a "J," and molt again, but this time, a pupa comes out!



Keep a Journal!



There are some very interesting things you can learn about biology by keeping a journal of your observations!

- *How long do the eggs take to hatch?*
- *How many times do the caterpillars molt?*
- *How long does it take for a caterpillar to turn into a chrysalis?*

You can write your notes in a journal, or you could take photos and upload them to websites like iNaturalist, where your information can be used by scientists who research Monarchs, and how changes in the environment affect their behavior and life cycle.