



# MONARCHS IN SPACE

## HOW TO MAINTAIN ADULT MONARCHS

To maintain monarchs in your classroom or home, you need to 1) know their behavior, 2) use the right food source, 3) deliver the food so it is accessible to the butterflies, 4) use an appropriate cage or container (at least 1 square foot in volume), and 5) maintain the monarchs at a temperature and light cycle that allows them to be active enough to feed.

### BEHAVIOR

#### Monarchs...

1. Go to the light and go up.
2. Do not readily find food at the bottom of a cage.
3. Seldom feed the day of emergence.
4. Feed little during the second day unless temperatures are above 75F.
5. Need to feed more when the temperatures are higher.
6. Taste with their feet and extend their proboscis in the presence of water and/or juice/Gatorade/honey or sugar water. They may also be able to sense water with their antennae.

### FEEDING

#### Recommended food for adult butterflies:

1. Gatorade (but not red – it stains)
2. Juicy Juice
3. Monarch Watch artificial nectar
4. Fresh cut fruits such as watermelons, cantaloupes, and grapes.

5. Honey water – 1pt honey and 9 pts water

**Food not recommended for adult butterflies:**

1. Sugar water – tends to become sticky and to gum up the proboscis
2. Fresh flowers – many flowers do not have nectar and those that do tend not to retain nectar for more than a day once they have been cut

**Feeders**

1. Feeders can be made from shallow containers and a plastic pot scrubber. Capillary action brings the nectar up the tines/coils of the scrubber, but usually not to the top, allowing the butterfly to feed while keeping its feet and wings dry.
2. Thin sponges
3. Any other system that allows the butterfly to get access to the nectar but allows them to keep dry.

**Location of feeders**

1. Top feeding – place thin sponges soaked with nectar, but not runny, on the screen top of the cage. Catch any drip with sponges at the bottom of the cage. Leave in place for several hours each day.
2. Elevated feeders – use a turned over flowerpot or other system to elevate a feeder to within 10” of the top of the cage.

**Changing food**

1. Gatorade – every 4-5 days
2. Juicy Juice – every two-three days
3. Monarch Watch nectar – once every 10 days
4. Cut fruits – every other day
5. Honey water – every day Feeding By Hand Some butterflies are reluctant to feed but can be assisted to feed by using a pin to extend the proboscis to a surface containing the nectar. Once the butterfly has started to feed, place a cover over the butterfly until it stops feeding. Time of day of feeding In culture, monarchs feed throughout the light period but tend to feed more in the first few hours of light.

**CAGES****Recommended cages**

1. Cage made from a cardboard box cut off top and cut holes in sides and cover with netting.
2. Laundry hamper cage – use clips or other devices to cover with tulle or bridal veil netting.
3. Large aquarium covered with screen
4. A wood frame cage covered with screen

**Not recommended**

1. Butterfly pavilions or any form of tube cages
2. Any cage that does not allow you to place the feeders within 10" of the top of the cage.

**MISTING**

Mist the netting at the top of the cage or container twice a day

**REFRIGERATION**

To maintain monarchs for long periods, feed them well and place them in glassine envelopes in a sealable plastic container in a refrigerator. A moist paper towel that does not come in contact with the envelopes should be placed in the container. On a weekly basis, feed the butterflies by hand or place them in a cage with feeders for several hours (at temperatures >70F and ample lighting) and then return them to the refrigerator.

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