

Monarch Miracles IN MINDORO

Monarch caterpillars have an estimated survival rate of less than 10 percent in nature. Take into consideration the dramatic decrease of monarch populations in the last two decades, and you'll soon realize this survival rate spells trouble for the future of the monarch.

"Anyone can help the monarchs," says Carol Miller. Joanne Schnell adds, "Female monarchs only lay their eggs on milkweed, and the plant is a vital food source for caterpillars. We need more people to let the milkweed grow."

Carol and Joanne, both Jackson Electric members from the Mindoro area, are passionate about the monarch butterfly and enjoy the time they put into raising them. "I learned how to do this from my sister in Minnesota," explains Carol. "Her husband made a box for me, and I started from there."

"Carol started doing this first, and I learned from her," says Joanne. "I decided to get involved when someone gave me swamp milkweed. Soon enough, I had caterpillars all over the plant."

Swamp milkweed is just another member of the milkweed family. This variety produces white/pink flowers and does well in wet soil. The future of the monarch species depends greatly on milkweed. "It doesn't matter which variety," says Joanne. "They'll eat it as long as it's milkweed."

Creating a milkweed habitat by planting milkweed or by not destroying existing plants is the easiest way anyone can get involved. If you have access to an abundance of milkweed, you may want to take your efforts a step further, as did Carol and Joanne. By collecting monarch eggs or caterpillars from milkweed plants and raising them in a protected environment to reach the adult butterfly stage, these ladies are giving this species a higher chance of survival, at 80 to 95 percent, versus 10 percent in nature.

Carol Miller (l) and Joanne Schnell help raise monarch butterflies to increase their chances of survival.



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To get started, you need a container to house your caterpillars. You can find a lot of different ideas online with a quick Google search, but Joanne recommends starting out small, choosing a container that your caterpillars are not going to escape from. "I started out with an ice cream pail with a screen on the top before my son built me a box," she shares.

Next, the milkweed you will be feeding to your caterpillars needs to be kept in water at all times. You will need a small container that will act as a vase. You will also need a way of covering your container to prevent your caterpillars from falling into the water while they are crawling all over the milkweed leaves. Joanne suggests the use of a cottage cheese container with a lid. "I put slits in the cover just big enough to poke the milkweed stems through into the water."

Once you have your containers and access to a good supply of milkweed, you can collect caterpillars off milkweed plants and put them inside your container. It is suggested to only collect as many caterpillars as you can manage. You will typically find the caterpillars rather than eggs. "The eggs are just a small dot, smaller than the head of a pin," says Joanne.

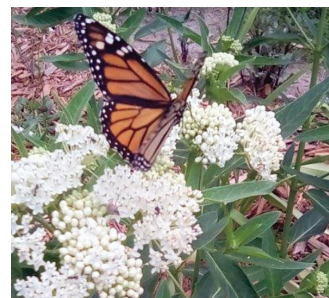
Finally, you need to pick a fresh supply of milkweed for your newly collected caterpillars to eat immediately. "You need to keep checking on them and make sure the milkweed stays fresh, supplied, and watered," says Carol.

"Their purpose as a caterpillar is to eat and grow," adds Joanne. "They just need food."

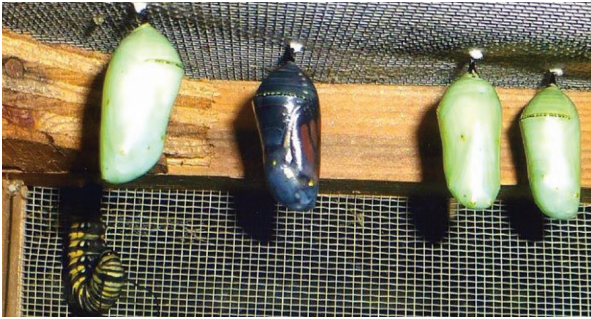
The monarch stays in the caterpillar stage for about two weeks. During that time, you'll need to keep your container clean and remove the waste from the caterpillars. "The easiest way is to line your box with newspaper," recommends Joanne.

Monarch caterpillars shed their skins or molt a total of five times while they're growing. You'll know when this is happening by the shedding skin and the wiggling movement of the caterpillar as it frees itself from its old skin. "For the last molt, the caterpillar will hang upside down from the top of the screen," shares Carol. "They form a J shape, squirm, and shed their skin."

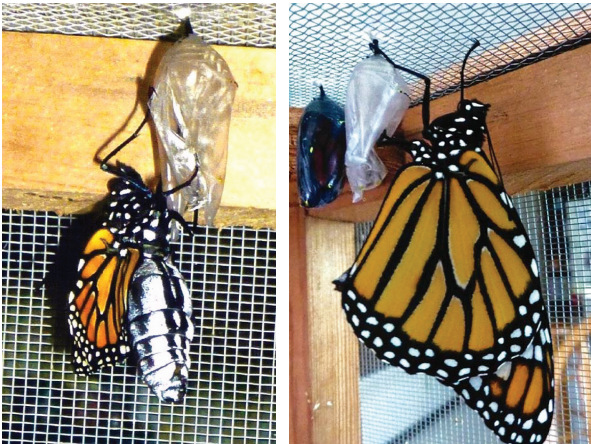
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Left: A monarch caterpillar feeds on Joanne's swamp milkweed plant. Right: Adult monarchs need food once they are ready to be released from the growing box.



The caterpillar forms a J shape and enters the chrysalis stage to develop into an adult butterfly.



The adult monarch frees itself from the chrysalis. It takes several hours for the wings to unfold and dry out.

“Now the monarch is a pupa in the chrysalis stage for up to two more weeks,” says Joanne.

During the chrysalis stage the pupa is developing into an adult butterfly. “When the butterfly emerges from chrysalis, it is all scrunched up and drip dries,” explains Carol. “It takes a few hours before they are dry and their wings start to unfold.”

By the end of the day, the new adult monarch is more active and its wings have hardened and become strong enough for flight. “You shouldn’t keep them too long after this, but you have to decide if that butterfly is ready to be released,” shares Joanne. “They usually come out of the chrysalis in the morning, and I release them later in the afternoon, after about six to eight hours of drying.”

“If you put your hand into the box, the butterfly will crawl onto your finger,” describes Carol. “You want to gently move your butterfly to a place where they’ll be safe until they take off, such as on a tree branch.”

As an adult, monarch butterflies feed on nectar from plants such as coneflowers, bee balm,

and goldenrods. Additionally, they drink water. “You can help the monarchs in their adult life by planting food that they like,” says Joanne.

As previously mentioned, anyone can make a difference for the monarchs. In her first year alone, Joanne successfully raised 36 monarch caterpillars into adults. “You wonder how this can happen so quickly and turn into a butter-



Carol is ready to release this monarch into nature.

fly in just a short amount of time,” says Joanne. “Any time you put into it is well worth it.”

Prior to COVID precautions, Carol shared her butterflies with the community through visits to nursing home residents and elementary school students. It’s also an activity she enjoys teaching her grandson. “The whole thing is a miracle that I love to be a part of,” concludes Carol of her experience in raising monarch butterflies.—*Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Advisor*



Did you know? Male monarchs have two black spots, one on each wing.

SUMMER ENERGY CHARGE EFFECTIVE WITH JUNE USAGE

Starting with your July billing statement, June usage, the regular residential energy charge will switch to the summer energy charge. This charge will be in effect with the June, July, and August usage.

The wholesale cost of energy is higher during the summer months due to higher electric demand. With the summer heat, cooling systems are operating, and other equipment tends to work harder to maintain its temperature.

Sales Tax A sales tax will be applied to your electric bill for electric usage in the months of May through October. According to Wisconsin Statute 77.54(30)(a) 2, “Electricity and natural gas sold during the months of November, December, January, February, March, and April for residential

use” are exempt from sales and use tax. This statute was enacted in 1995.

The state government regards electricity for residential use during the winter months as a necessity; therefore, it is exempt from sales tax during these months. “Residential use” is defined in the statute as a structure or portion of a structure which is a person’s permanent principle residence. It does not include use in motor homes, travel trailer, other recreational vehicles, or transient accommodations.

If you feel your farming operation or business meets year-round tax exemption status, please confirm that you have a completed and signed Wisconsin Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certificate on file at Jackson Electric’s office.

KEEP YOUR ENERGY USAGE LOW DURING THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

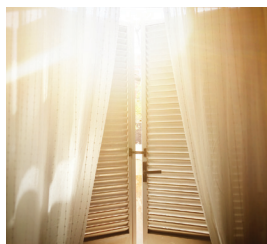
Cooling Wisconsin summers can be unpredictable. One day it's breezy and comfortable, the next humid and sticky. If you turn to your air conditioner for relief on those dog days of summer, know that there are costs associated with staying cool. However, there are ways to make your air conditioner operate more efficiently. One way is to clean your air filters regularly and schedule regular maintenance with an HVAC technician.

Did you know simply raising the thermostat by one degree can save you up to 3-5% on cooling costs? You can also use ceiling fans to your advantage. Fans paired with an air conditioner can make your home feel more comfortable, possibly allowing you to increase the thermostat setting in your home. Just remember that fans cool people, not rooms, so turn off the switch when you leave.

Does your old, inefficient central air conditioner need to be replaced? Consider installing an air source heat pump. They work just like a central air conditioning unit, decrease humidity, and can be used for heating when temperatures drop this fall.

Want to know how much energy it takes to cool your home? Check out our Use Energy Wisely booklet. You can request a copy from our office or download it from www.jackelec.com.

Windows Curtains have a greater purpose than looking pretty or offering privacy. Treating your windows to a makeover can reduce summer heat gain. According to energy.gov, it is estimated that 76% of sunlight that comes through standard windows enters to become heat. Covering windows that receive direct sunlight during the day can help keep your home cooler.



Is it a nice breezy day? Turn off the air conditioner and open the windows to give your home a breath of fresh air. Cost? Zero kWh.

Laundry Sweatshirts and jeans have been swapped out for short-sleeve tops and shorts. While summer clothing tends to be lighter and less bulky, you still may find yourself doing lots of laundry if you have kids playing outside or the kid in you is doing extra outdoor projects. You can save money on laundry this summer by only washing full loads of clothes, washing

with cold water when possible, and using the correct water setting. If you have to use the dryer, save your laundry chores for the coolest parts of the day. If you have the means to switch to line drying, the zero-kWh approach to laundry, you'll have more money in your pocket for summer fun, and your clothes will last longer by not being exposed to dryer heat.

Cooking Grilling and summer are the perfect pair. Tasty hamburgers, brats, and grilled chicken are enough of an incentive alone to fire up the grill. Take into account the energy your oven or stovetop won't be using inside your home, plus the added benefit of eliminating the extra heat from cooking indoors. Grilled food and energy savings are a win-win situation any day.



Electronics and Small Appliances As the weather gets nicer, you're sure to be spending more time outdoors. More outdoor time equals less time spent indoors. If you find yourself taking advantage of the extra daylight hours that summer brings, you may want to take inventory of the items you have plugged in throughout your house. Does your television need to be plugged in all week just to watch it a few hours? Do you leave your device chargers plugged into the outlet all the time? How about that radio or speaker system that you use occasionally? A lamp? It may seem insignificant to unplug every little thing, but these little things add up and contribute to your monthly usage.

Refrigerators and Freezers Most households have that extra fridge or freezer in the garage, basement, or other space. If that space is not heated or cooled, please be cautious of this decision. Not only can extreme temperatures damage your appliance, but they can also make it work a lot harder and cause operation costs to spike. If you must put an extra freezer or refrigerator in an unconditioned space, look for "garage ready" rated appliances, which are built to handle more extreme temperatures. Look for the Energy Star logo on your next appliance purchase and apply for Jackson Electric's rebate.

Campers Who doesn't love a campfire and s'mores? Summer brings along several holidays and opportunities to get use out of the camper. It's just a camper, not a house, so it doesn't use a lot of energy, right? Not exactly. Whether it's parked on an empty lot or in your relative's yard for the weekend, it probably isn't going to break you, but expect to see an increase in your energy consumption if you have an extra camper plugged in for most of the summer. If the camper's air conditioner is also running, expect the camper's electrical consumption to double.



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Swimming Pools/Pumps Don't forget that if your swimming pool has a pump or you're running the water more to fill a pool, run the sprinkler, or water plants, a water pump and a swimming pool pump consume energy, too! Conserve energy by being conscious of how long you keep the water running.

To save energy and money over time, look for Energy Star certified pool pumps. Energy Star claims certified pool pumps for a standard above-ground pool will use about 17% less energy, paying for themselves in less than two years.

Reduce Hot Air/Humidity When it's humid, you work harder to stay cool, just like the rest of the items in your home. Even if it's not a "hot" summer, humidity will cause your appliances and air conditioner to work harder and consume more energy. It's recommended to keep your home's humidity at 30 to 50% to maintain comfort.

How can you reduce humidity in your home?

- Invest in a dehumidifier. While there is an expense to running a dehumidifier, the reward is reduced humidity in your home and allowing your air conditioner, refrigerators, and freezers to work more efficiently. Look for the Energy Star logo on your next dehumidifier purchase and qualify for a \$50 rebate from Jackson Electric!
- Take shorter, cooler showers and use your exhaust fans for 15 minutes to extract that hot air.
- Line dry your laundry outdoors. Hanging damp clothing indoors will increase humidity. If you're not able to hang the clothes to dry, be sure your dryer is vented outside your home, and save your drying chores for cooler parts of the day.
- If you must cook indoors, be sure to use your range's exhaust fan to extract the extra heat.—*Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Advisor*



Sources: Touchstone Energy, energy.gov, energystar.gov, epa.gov, and cooperative.com

WATER HEATERS STILL WORK WHILE YOU'RE AWAY

Turning off your water heater while you're away doesn't guarantee that you will save money on your water heating. Generally, if you have a high-efficiency water heater there is little benefit in turning off the water heater for a duration of less than one week.

If you plan to be gone for longer than one week, timing is the key to saving money. If your water heater is completely heated at the time you turn it off, there will be little, if any, savings by doing so because you have already paid to heat the water that will cool down while you are away. The money-saving trick is to turn the water heater off early enough so most of the water you paid to heat is used before you leave. Cold water entering the water heater as you use the hot water will remain cold, using no energy, until you return and turn the water heater back on.

WATER HEATER PROGRAM UPDATE 50-gallon water heater sales cease

Due to the increase of cost from our manufacturer, Jackson Electric will no longer be selling 50-gallon water heaters. The last day of sales will be June 30, 2021, or earlier if we sell out of our remaining inventory.

For those members who have a remaining warranty on their water heater, we will keep a minimal number of 50-gallon water heaters in stock for warranty replacements only.

We will continue to sell 100-gallon Marathon water heaters. 85-gallon Marathon water heaters are available for warranty replacements only and to the original owner.

Jackson Electric Cooperative's VIRTUAL Annual Meeting

**Tuesday, August 24, 2021
7:00 p.m.**

Watch for additional meeting information in the upcoming months.



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