

News Release

BASF #MonarchChallenge has another successful year

20,000 milkweed seedlings were shipped across the country in 2019

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC, January 20, 2020 – The BASF Living Acres Monarch Challenge has completed another successful year. In 2019, 20,000 milkweed seedlings were shipped to farmers and golf courses across the Midwest who were passionate about preserving monarch populations.

Milkweed is the essential plant for the monarch butterfly life cycle and the sole food source for the monarch caterpillar. It has become less common over the years, which is why the BASF Monarch Challenge encourages the planting of milkweed in non-crop areas of farm land and out-of-play areas of golf courses.

Since its start nearly four years ago, the Monarch Challenge has flourished, with increasing support from across the agriculture and golf course industries. Farmers, farm families and golf courses have been enthusiastic about stepping up and getting involved in the program.

“Last year, we visited a number of events across the U.S. and learned firsthand how many farmers’ perceptions of milkweed have shifted,” said Chip Shilling, BASF Sustainability Strategy Manager, Agricultural Products, North America. “Milkweed has been known as a problem weed for generations, but throughout the last few years, farmers are beginning to understand milkweed can thrive in non-productive areas of farmland.”

With the support of many this year, the challenge successfully garnered more than 2,500 farmers, farm families and others interested in monarch conservation, and led to partnerships with more than 56 golf courses.

“Every critter is a beneficial critter, is the way I see it,” said Andy Herring, a North Carolina farmer who has participated in the Monarch Challenge for several years. “I think what we’ve been doing with milkweed is going to help in some way.”

Terry Hills Golf Course, located in upstate New York, took the Monarch Challenge two years ago, and since then the milkweed has flourished. “It has especially flourished within our community,” said Thad Thompson, Superintendent at Terry Hills. “People will stop in to look at the habitat. They’re excited to see a golf course giving back to their community by doing something positive for the environment.”

The Monarch Challenge first spread its wings in 2016 as part of the BASF Living Acres biodiversity program. Since taking flight, over 6,500 participants have signed up for the Monarch Challenge, and 65,500 milkweed plants have been established on farmlands and golf courses from Rhode Island to Idaho. BASF Living Acres has put years into preserving and reestablishing milkweed habitats, and it has become greatly rewarding as more and more people become interested in aiding monarch populations.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been tasked with determining whether the monarch butterfly warrants Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection. Since the deadline for that decision is December 15, 2020, it is important that the Monarch Challenge continues to spread as many milkweed seedlings as possible throughout the country next year.

“No matter the decision, we will continue to educate and grow our program in aiding monarch butterflies and other pollinators,” said Shilling. “All the measures we take are to ensure we are helping farmers and golf courses leave a sustainable operation for future generations.”

To learn more about Living Acres and the Monarch Challenge, visit MonarchChallenge.com. Follow #MonarchChallenge on Social Media to see what participants already achieved.

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