

Virtual Hortlandia 2020

Milkweed & Mustard Seed Nursery

<https://www.facebook.com/MilkweedMustardSeed/>

This week, Joanne Fuller interviewed Elaine Kelley from Milkweed & Mustard Seed Nursery and edited the conversation for this article.

Elaine, what do you grow?

I grow a very limited number of plants. I grow Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*) which is the native milkweed found in the Western half of the U.S. It is the food source and habitat plant for the Monarch butterfly. Milkweed also attracts other pollinators. I also grow the native Blanketflower (*Gaillardia aristata*). This beautiful wildflower has bright red flowers with yellow tips on each petal. And, I grow *Lewisia cotyledon* and *Clarkia*. *Lewisia cotyledon* is a rock garden plant that comes from the mountains of Southern Oregon. *Clarkias*, of course, are annuals that bring mixed colors to the pollinator garden.

How did you get started?

I didn't start gardening until I was past 60 years old. I grew my first tomato when I was 65 years old. But when I started gardening, I fell deeply in love. Then about five years ago, I started getting into native plants and volunteering for the Scappoose Bay Native Plant Greenhouse. A good friend, Mary Hansen, gave me the idea of focusing on growing milkweed to support the life cycle of the Monarch butterfly. Mary is a long time HPSO member, she got me to join HPSO, and she has been a great mentor.

Milkweed & Mustard Seed is a small operation with about 2,000 plants on an acre of land in Warren, Oregon. I don't grow mustard-- that is a reference to the parable of the mustard seed, basically a lesson that one person can change the world.

Do you get Monarch butterflies on your property?

My property is out of the current range of the Monarch butterfly, but Portland gardens get Monarchs. We should all be planting *Asclepias speciosa*. Scientists believe that with climate change, the migration of the Monarch will be moving North and West. That means the Willamette Valley and the Oregon Coast will become very important locations for the Monarch butterfly's primary food source, *Asclepias speciosa*. I have lots of information and handouts about supporting Monarch butterflies, and I'm happy to talk with groups about Monarch preservation.

*When and where should gardeners plant *Asclepias speciosa*?*

Milkweed is best planted in the Spring or Fall. *Asclepias speciosa* doesn't want supplemental water in summer-- so keep that in mind for locating your plants. Starting Milkweed from seed is difficult. If gardeners want to do it, I can provide advice. And, we should all be planting Milkweed everywhere to support our Monarch butterflies.

How do customers buy plants from you?

I don't have a retail operation. People can order plants from me via Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MilkweedMustardSeed/> . I make deliveries when I come into Portland, depending on demand.