

Learn about monarchs, how to support them at Schererville festival

SARAH REESE

sarah.reese@nwi.com, 219-933-3351

SCHERERVILLE — Have you wondered why it seems monarch butterflies are everywhere this summer?

Experts will answer that question and many more Sept. 9 at the Monarch Butterfly Festival at the Tri-Town Safety Village Butterfly Garden in Schererville.

Visitors to the garden this year have seen monarch, viceroy, red admiral, eastern tiger and eastern black swallowtail, sulphur, cabbage white, painted lady and red spotted purple butterflies, Lake County master gardener Kelly Tripp said.

It's been a great year for monarchs because of the spring weather, she said.

Few severe storms and wildfires in the South helped build the first generation during the migration from Mexico. Cold weather in the Midwest held the monarchs in the southern states longer, allowing them to lay more eggs, Tripp said.

The festival is timed to coincide with the final part of the butterflies' migration back to Mexico.

To remain viable, the monarch population must be at least 300 million. In 2012, the population was estimated at just 25 million.

That number rose to 150 million in 2016, but declined to 125 million in 2017.

The 2017 migration covered about 6 acres in the oyamel fir tree forests of central Mexico, Tripp said.

Visitors to this year's festival will learn more about the monarch migration and how they can help support butterfly populations.

Horticulturist Dolly Foster, of Hammond, will man the butterfly tagging station and talk with visitors one on one. Foster has been raising monarch caterpillars for 10 years and is on track to release 1,000 butterflies this year, Tripp said.

There will be a butterfly raising information booth and exhibits by The Nature Conservancy, Shirley Heinz Land Trust and Wild Ones.

The festival is scheduled from noon to 4 p.m. Sept. 9 at the garden, 1350 E. Ridge Drive in Schererville.

To join the garden's mailing list for events and classes, email eventBFG@gmail.com. To volunteer, email VolBFG@gmail.com.

All other inquiries should be emailed to butterflygardenKT@gmail.com.



JOHN J. WATKINS, THE TIMES

A monarch butterfly is seen in 2017 at The Butterfly Garden at Tri-Town Safety Village.