

Raising Monarchs: The Daily Drill



- 1) Gather fresh milkweed leaves from your milkweed patch. Check for Monarch caterpillars and eggs in your patch as you collect leaves.
- 2) Check the leaves you collected carefully for tiny 1st instar caterpillars or eggs.
- 3) Remove caterpillars from your rearing cage and do a head count to make sure you have found all of them. Before unzipping the rearing cage, make sure no caterpillars are on the zipper. If they are, carefully unzip an opening and either work around them or encourage them to move. Sometimes caterpillars will curl up in old leaves as they molt or digest. If so, simply move the caterpillar on the leaf. It will crawl out later. Sometimes caterpillars will stand on the rearing cage wall or roof while they molt or digest. If so, leave them be. They will move later when they are ready. Sometimes they rest on the paper towel. If they aren't ready to move, take a pair of scissors and cut out the piece of paper towel that they are resting on. Sometimes they rest of the side of the plastic milkweed container. If they will not move, carefully rinse the container with water to get rid of frass without disturbing them. The key is to account for all the caterpillars so you don't throw any away with old leaves or paper towels by mistake.
- 4) Remove the old paper towel and frass and put down fresh paper towel.
- 5) Stand the fresh milkweed up in the holes in the plastic container and place inside the rearing house. Make sure there are no holes that caterpillars could fall into and drown.
- 6) Put caterpillars back in the rearing house. Do a head count as you put them back to make sure no one wandered away while you were cleaning the house.
- 7) Zip up the rearing cage.

If you found any new caterpillars while collecting your milkweed, you can add them to rearing cage. However, if they are very small (e.g. 1st instar or 2nd instar) then rear them in a tupperware container with small air holes for a day or two until they are big enough to go into the rearing cage. (Why do this? Because tiny cats are hard to see and you can lose them in a big cage and because bigger cats may eat smaller ones by mistake)

For more information, visit the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy
website: www.loudounwildlife.org

