

MILKWEED ALLEY

A MILKWEED PROJECT PROPOSAL FOR GARLAND

From Elizabeth Berry - Loving Garland Green - Garland, Texas



A whole lot of potential is on this plate. Asclepias asperula (Antelope horns) Milkweed – gathered by Kala King, (Garland nature photographer) and shared with Loving Garland Green for planting at the Garland Community Garden.

Motivation, born of need, is the energy that fuels innovation. I believe our community can be motivated to help the Monarch with great enthusiasm especially if we can show the potential economic benefits for our local economy that might arise from providing Monarchs with all the host plants they need. Milkweeds, Monarchs and people all have destinies that can be intertwined into a mutually beneficial relationship.

Consider the following advertisement from *Monarch Flyway*, a company located in Ogallala, Nebraska and realize there is already a market for milkweed. We don't have to struggle with creating a market. <http://buymilkweed.com>

Got Milkweed?

"We pay cash for milkweed pods. Our business is growing and with that, we need more milkweed pods than ever. Modeled after the wild collection effort mounted in World War II, we supply "collection points" with onion bags and independent "pickers" go out and pick pods. We look for organized, self-motivated people who are well connected in their community to head the effort in their area. The pod-picking window is only 4-6 weeks so it is a lot of work in a short amount of time.



Monarch Flyway pays for bags and shipping to their processing plant in Ogallala, Nebraska. So it makes economic sense for the collection point and Monarch Flyway, they try to choose areas that are able to grow over time and start with a minimum of 3,000 pounds. One collection point brought in over 100,000 pounds one year. Collection goals are set and agreed upon by Monarch Flyway and the collection point before the harvest."

Hang onto Your Hats and Imagine this Urban Agricultural Feat: All or most all of the three foot strips of green in our alleys are planted with milkweed.

The photo above shows the typical Garland residential alley. We have miles of alleys within the 57 square mile area of our metropolis. Just imagine if both sides of all these alleys are planted in milkweed. It would make for easy picking in the fall.

BUSINESS MODEL OVERVIEW

Resident homeowners who agree to participate will sign over the use of their three-foot strip of alley green and agree to plant designated milkweed seeds (furnished by Monarch Flyway?) or to allow community groups such as Loving Garland Green, Boy Scouts, and school children to plant the milkweeds. Harvesting the seeds will be a community effort. Perhaps we can establish a large Garland Milkweed Cooperative. This cooperative would begin as suppliers of milkweed for Monarch Flyway.

The ultimate goal of the cooperative would be to retain the milkweed product and use it to create our own local industries producing products from the milkweed. Perhaps this would take two to three years for the development of this community enterprise.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE NEBRASKA COMPANY: MONARCH FLYWAY

Ironically, Herb Knudsen, founder of Monarch Flyway, was once Vice President of New Ventures for Standard Oil of Ohio. He decided to develop high value products to start and sustain Monarch Flyway. Their first value-added business was Ogallala Comfort Company that was established in 1988. **Ogallala Comfort Company** sells hypodown comforters and pillows throughout the world. They service independent Specialty Stores, High-end catalogs, luxury good websites and exclusive hotels.

Knowing the positive characteristics of *Asclepias* (Milkweed) such as gardening benefits of creating Monarch habitat, and soil conservation, they created **Asclepias Seed Company**. Their seed is sold for land reclamation, highway beautification, butterfly gardens, and to butterfly farmers.

The most recent development of this company is their pain relieving **Milkweed Balm** from the oil of the milkweed seed. This product came into being when Herb, who was scheduled for a hip replacement saw the oil on his shelf and wondered what would happen if he rubbed it on his hip. He did and he started moving and feeling better.

Every part of the plant can be used in a commercial application.

Finding uses for milkweed raw materials creates a winning relationship for all—and of course, that includes the Monarch.

THE VISION

If we hope to live better, we must begin to think differently. For example, we can take a good look at the potential that milkweed offers not only the Monarch, but us as well. From that viewpoint we can also consider all the potential that unused urban land offers us. Even the so-called nuisance spaces in our alleys offer promise for improved circumstances. We need to more fully realize the potential of our urban resources.

Our cities could be banquet tables for every resident, yet today many of our urban areas have food deserts within their boundaries with children going hungry. There is no need or excuse for this other than lack of imagination. The resources are there today for a better world. Let's start realizing them all. – Elizabeth Berry