

## Other Uses For Eggshells

by Linda Heideman, Somervell County Master Gardener



Betcha never knew that eggshells do more than just hold an egg together! I have tried these ideas, and they really do work!

1. Add crushed eggshells to the bottom of planting holes, especially for tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant. These crops are susceptible to blossom end rot, which is caused by calcium deficiency. While this deficiency is most often caused by improper watering, there's no harm in making sure your plants have a steady source of calcium. As the eggshells break down, they'll [nourish the soil](#), and your plants.
2. Use eggshells as [pots for starting plants from seed](#). Then plant the seedling, "pot" and all, into the garden.
3. Use crushed eggshells to deter slugs, snails, and cutworms. These [garden pests](#) are a real pain in the gardener's neck, and cutworms are the worst, killing seedlings by severing the stems at soil level. All three of these pests have soft undersides, and dislike slithering across anything sharp. Crushed eggshells, applied to the soil's surface, may help deter these pests.
4. Add them to the [compost pile](#). If you aren't planting tomatoes or trying to deter slugs, add the eggshells to your compost pile, where they'll add calcium to your finished compost.
5. If you are [feeding birds](#) in your yard, crush up the eggshells and add them to a dish near the feeder. Female birds, particularly those who are getting ready to lay eggs or recently finished laying, require extra calcium and will definitely appreciate it!

No matter how you want to use them, be sure to rinse the shells out well before using them in the garden.

# HAVE ANTELOPE HORN? HAVE MONARCHS!

by Shirley D. Smith, Somervell County Master Gardener

If you attended April's Community Horticulture Education Series presented by the Somervell County Master Gardeners, then you know that the Monarch butterfly is headed our direction.



When you travel and it begins to be lunchtime and your tummy tells you it needs food, you probably start to look for a good place to eat. Well . . . . the Monarchs will be doing the same. They will have flown from north central Mexico and are hungry! They are also looking for a plant on which to lay their eggs. The plant they will be looking for is called *Asclepias asperula* or antelope horn. This plant grows right here in central Texas along with its

cousins – other milkweeds. If you see a somewhat strange looking plant such as shown in the accompanying picture, then you are probably looking at antelope horn. It seems to be in abundance this year (at least it is on my property south of Glen Rose).

Antelope horn milkweed is an erect-stemmed plant growing to about 15 inches tall. Leaves are narrow, lance-shaped and about 3 inches long. The flowers are greenish with distinctive purplish horns and are present from March to October. The fruit is a wrinkled pod containing silk-tufted seeds.



Every spring, millions of Monarch butterflies migrate north from the forested uplands of central Mexico's Sierra Madre Occidental range. Some reach as far north as Canada. However, those making the journey in 2014 will be fewer in number than ever before. To further elaborate on their plight, here is an excerpt from USA Today dated April 27, 2014:

Monarch butterflies once were so common that some people find it hard to believe that they are declining so rapidly.

"If you tell an old-timer that, they say, 'Well, that can't be, because when I was a kid they were everywhere,' "

That was the case when Taylor, who grew up in Minnesota, was a child. He would put a caterpillar in a peanut-butter jar with a leaf and watch as it became a butterfly. It was a common experiment for kids who grew up in the Midwest and had an interest in nature.

The key to the butterfly experiment was simple: The leaf had to be a milkweed leaf. That's all the caterpillar needed to survive to adulthood. Monarchs lay their eggs on milkweed and nothing else.



Researchers believe the loss of milkweed plants is a big reason for the Monarchs' decline.

Milkweed is not a cash crop and so has been eliminated from many Midwestern farm fields to make room for more corn and soybeans. Nabhan and others believe **that simply planting milkweed in the path of the migration can increase the Monarchs' numbers.**

"We have to get the message out," she said.

Because this butterfly has recently been found to be in dangerous decline, their plight has attracted political attention. Here is another excerpt from that same article:

During their summit meeting in Toluca, Mexico, in February, the leaders of Mexico, the United States and Canada pledged to support the Monarch. Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, President Barack Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper called it a "landmark species" and said they hope to form a task force to address the problem.

If you are over 50, then you remember how abundant the Texas horned lizard or horny toad was when you were a kid. Up on the High Plains where I grew up, they were everywhere and we took their numbers for granted. When was the last time you saw one of these little guys? Yeah, me, too – not for years! Hopefully, the Monarch will make a come back and not become threatened as is our beloved Texas Horned Lizard.

The reason for this article is to make you aware that we could possibly lose this beautiful creature as we have almost lost the horny toad. What a terrible thought! You can do your part by making sure the milkweed growing in your yard, in your pasture, in your flowerbed or wherever is **not** destroyed!

# Where Do Cashews Come From?

by Sheryl Kleinschmidt, Somervell County Master Gardener

Ever wonder where cashews come from? You might think they grow inside a shell like any other nut, but their true origins are far more bizarre.



First of all, cashews are not actually nuts, but rather fruits from the cashew tree, a large evergreen tree that thrives in tropical climates.

The tree produces red flowers, which in turn produce yellow and red oval structures resembling apples.

These so-called cashew apples are very juicy and pulpy, and their juice is often added to tropical fruit drinks.

However, cashew apples are not actually fruits in a scientific sense; the real fruit of the cashew tree is the kidney-shaped formation growing at the end.

These fruits, also called drupes, are harvested and become what we know as a cashew nut.

In their raw form, the other layer of the fruit contains multiple toxins, including anacardic acid, a powerful skin irritant similar to the toxin found in poison ivy that must be removed prior to eating. Roasting the cashews destroys the toxins, but roasting must be performed carefully outdoors because the smoke can irritate the lungs, sometimes to a life-threatening degree.



When they are roasted, cashews change from their natural greenish-gray

color to the light brown nut sold in stores.

Next time you crack open a tin of cashews, take a moment to appreciate the long journey those little c-shaped nuts took from the tree to your table!

