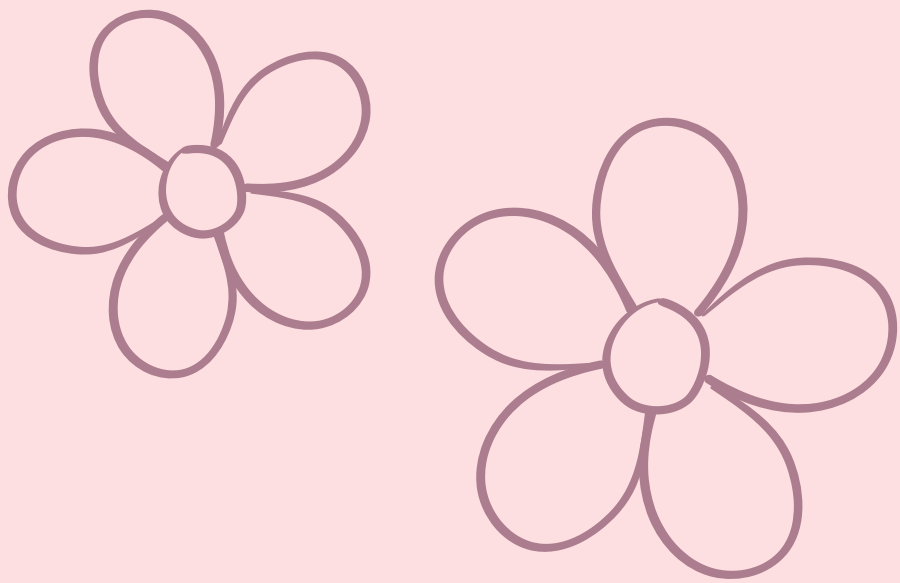


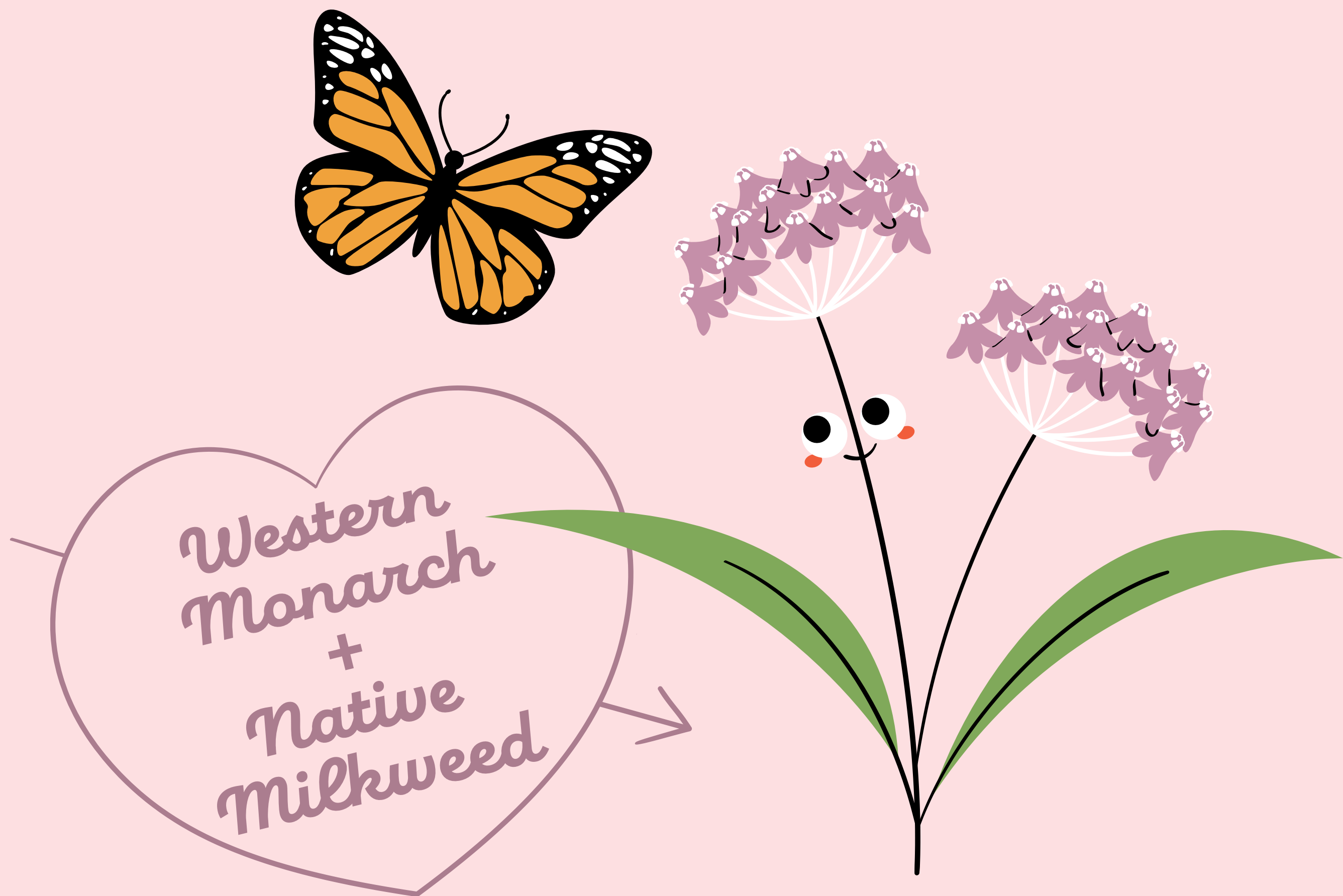


TreePeople



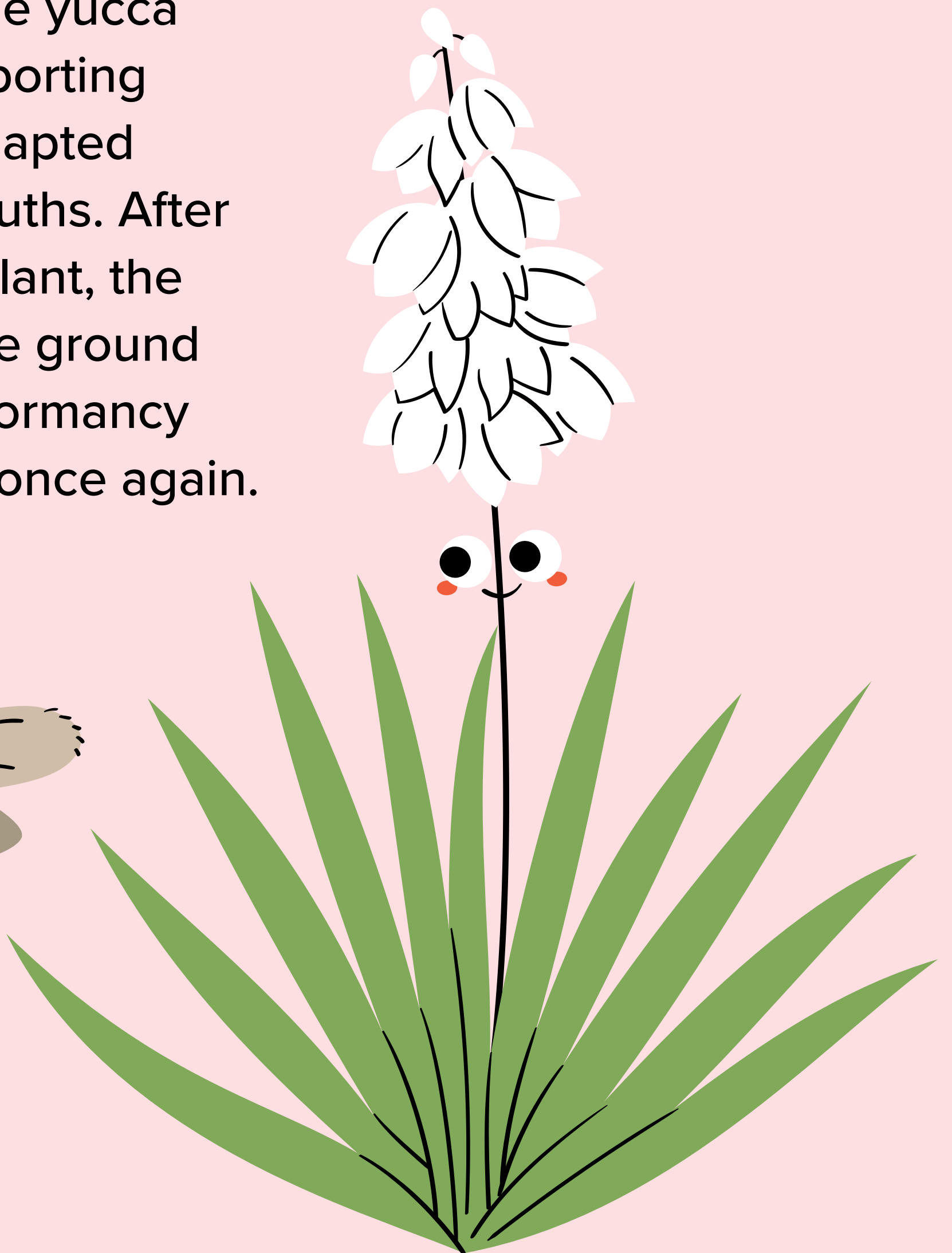
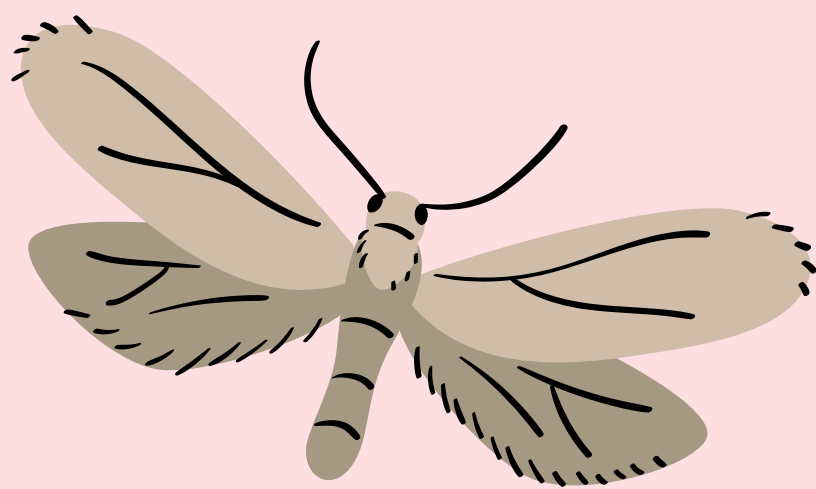
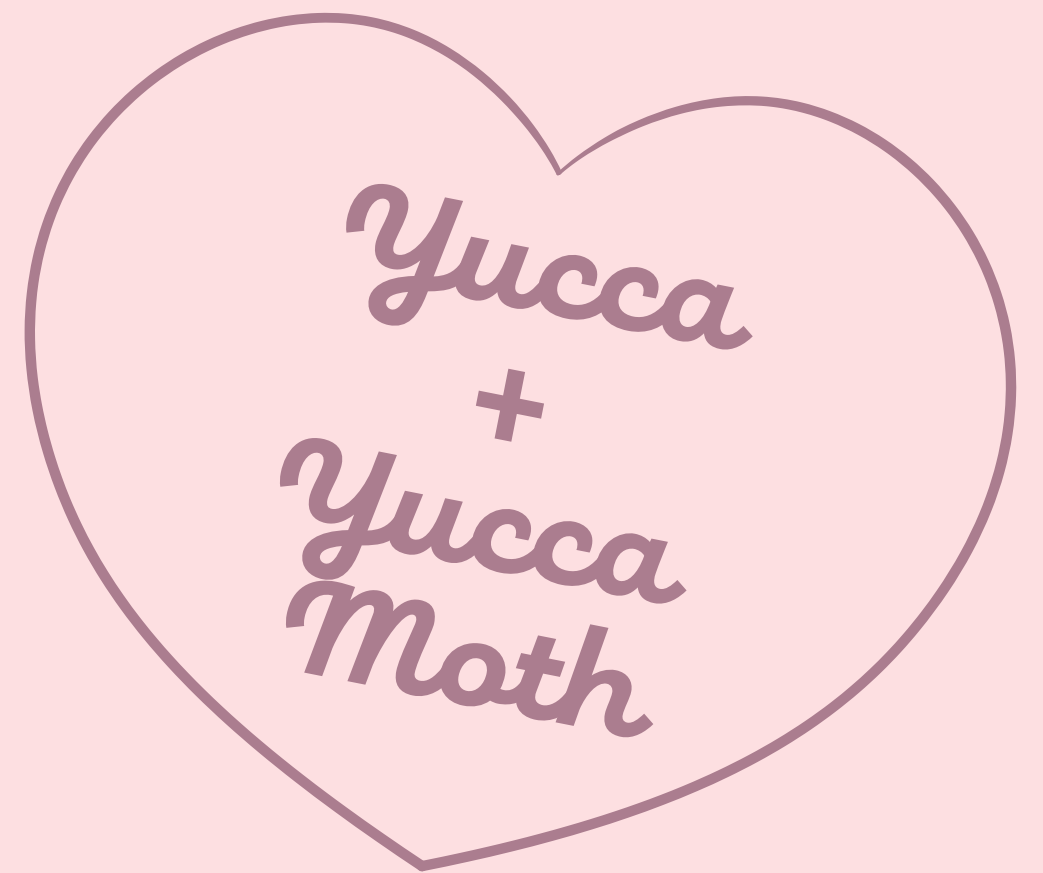
Natural Companions

*Iconic Mutualistic Relationships
in SoCal's Ecosystems*



Monarchs and milkweed have been evolving together for centuries. Milkweed is the only plant that monarch caterpillars can eat, and the latex in its leaves—which is poisonous to other animals—protects them from predators. Later, when the caterpillars grow up into beautiful butterflies, they help pollinate milkweed in return! Right now, TreePeople is working on planting more than 5,000 native milkweed plants across the Angeles National Forest to increase western monarch habitat.

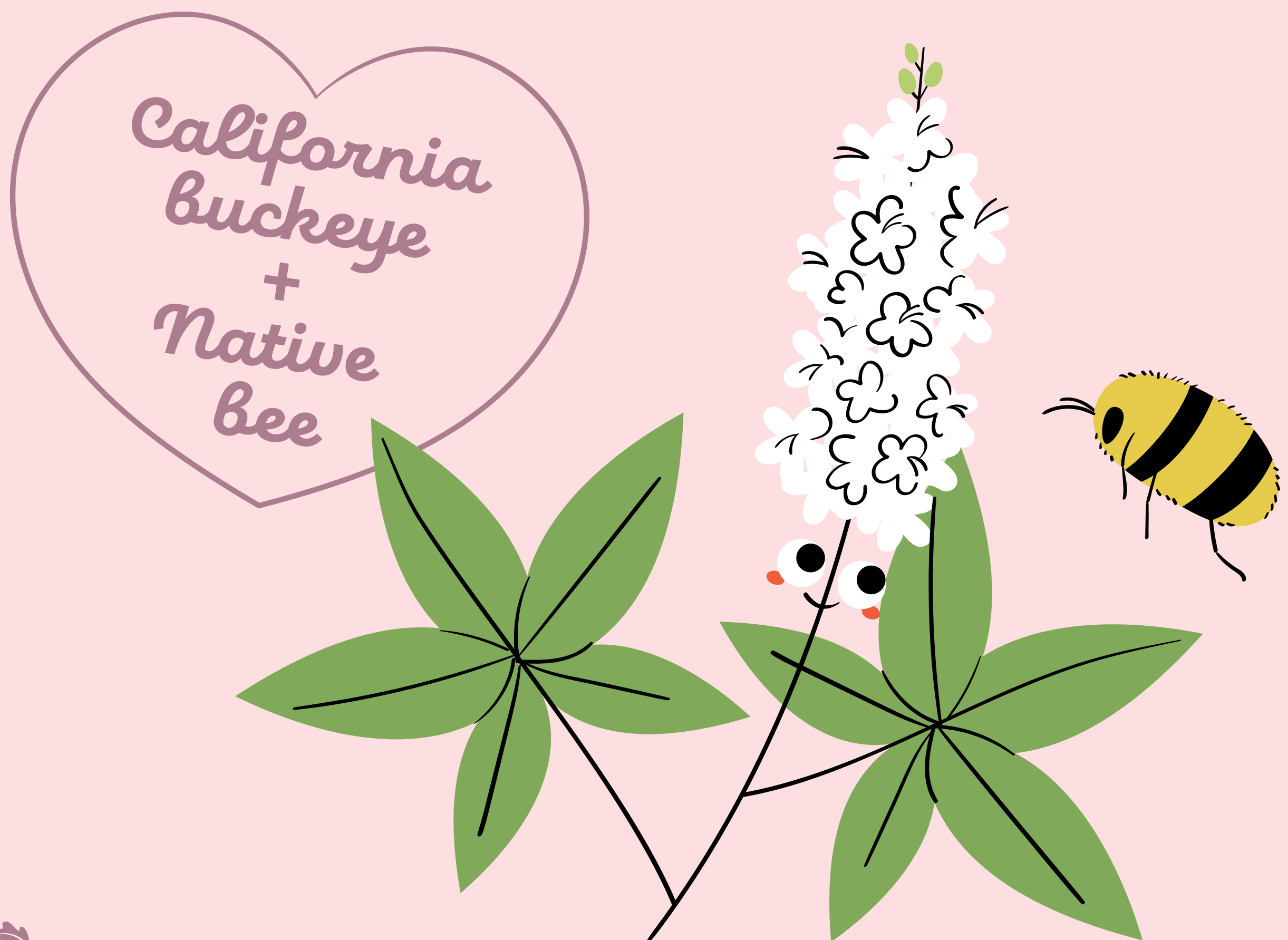
Every species of yucca has its own corresponding moth species—and the two literally cannot live without each other. During breeding season, the yucca serves as a host plant for these tiny white moths to breed and for their larvae to feed—and in return, the moth assists with the cross-pollination that the yucca needs to survive, transporting pollen with specially-adapted tentacles near their mouths. After feeding briefly on the plant, the larvae burrow below the ground and enter a period of dormancy until the yucca blooms once again.





Many unlucky hikers know to avoid poison oak at all costs, lest they wind up with a nasty rash. But for the California Towhee, poison oak is the perfect place to call home. These birds often build their cup-shaped nests among the plant's dense vines, and feast on its white berries well into fall when other food is lean. The birds then help disperse those seeds far and wide, allowing the plant to reproduce. So if you see poison oak's leaves of three, let them be—not just because they'll make you itchy, but because they might be sheltering some baby birds!

Every part of the native California Buckeye tree contains a substance called aesculin—a toxic compound similar to the chemicals found in rat poison! This can cause sickness in humans, livestock, and even non-native European honeybees, who sometimes bring its pollen back to their hive and poison the queen. But for native bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds—who have specifically evolved to tolerate the buckeye—the plant’s beautiful conical flowers are a veritable feast in the springtime. In return, the insects help pollinate the plant so it can produce its iconic buckeye seeds in the fall.



Thousands of species rely on native oak trees in SoCal... but one of the most important relationships oaks have is with the fungi that live below the ground. The mycorrhizae that grow on oaks' roots feed off of the trees' carbohydrates—which they need because they do not have chlorophyll to make their own food. In return, these fungi connect the oaks to an underground network that helps oaks get more access to water and nutrients, and can even protect them from pathogens.

