



Butterfly Gardening

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There is no more delightful decoration for a garden than nature's own – butterflies. On warm sunny days, these visitors provide color and motion that doubles the pleasure of gardening. Fortunately, it takes very little effort to make your yard more attractive to butterflies. Butterflies will visit and probably stay to lay eggs, wherever there is a variety of plants for food and shelter, some moisture, and absence of pesticides. While there are typically more species in warm climates than in cooler ones, there are butterflies everywhere in the country. Their appearance in your back yard ultimately depends on whether their favorite plants are growing there – certain ones to support the larvae, others to support adult butterflies.

Garden Design Tips

- Provide sun, a place for resting, and protection from the wind. Because they are cold-blooded, butterflies are usually not active on cool or cloudy days. As they need to warm up the muscles used in flying, butterflies do best in warm sunny locations. Rocks and logs, which will heat up in the sun, give butterflies places to bask and warm up for earlier take-offs.
- Allow for water. Male adult butterflies require extra sodium for mating and may often be seen at the edges of puddles lapping up the salts left behind for evaporation. This behavior is called puddling. Create artificial puddles in the garden to support male butterflies. Fill shallow pans or plastic saucers with large stones and water. Place large, flat stones in the garden for basking.
- Provide a place for roosting. Add a butterfly shelter mounted to a tree or a stake about 18 inches high in an area among the nectar plants. Butterflies naturally roost in shrubs, tree crevices, under bark or in log piles.
- Choose lots of kinds of plants -- herbs, annuals, perennials. Choose those with flat-topped or short tubular flowers. Use hot colors -- oranges, reds, yellows.
- Plan for continuous bloom the entire season. Choose from among annuals and perennials that flower all season.

- Use large masses of plants -- butterflies are attracted to color, not individual plants.

Provide Food for Larvae

Caterpillars eat leaves and sometimes flowers and seeds of certain plants. They are often picky eaters and may only feed on a specific plant or group of plants.

Food Source	Butterflies whose larvae feed on them
Dill (<i>Anethum graveolens</i>)	Eastern Black Swallowtail
Snapdragon (<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>)	Buckeye
Butterfly Weed (<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>)	Monarch, Queen
Red Cabbage (<i>Brassica oleracea capitata</i>)	Cabbage White, Checkered White
Sweet Pea (<i>Lathyrus odoratus</i>)	Eastern Tailed Blue
Nasturtium (<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>)	European Cabbage White
Parsley (<i>Petroselinum crispum</i>)	Eastern Black Swallowtail
Rue (<i>Ruta graveolens</i>)	Eastern Black Swallowtail

Other food sources: milkweed, dock, elm, hackberry, thistle, wild cherry, willow

Provide Nectar for Adults

Adult butterflies feed primarily on the nectar of flowers and will feed from a variety of available flowers. While they are attracted by both color and scent, butterflies have difficulty picking out individual flowers, so large masses are best for attracting them. Some suggested plants are:

Annuals

Ageratum (*Ageratum houstonianum*)
 Sunny Cosmos (*Cosmos sulphureus*)
 Globe amaranth (*Gomphrena globosa*)
 Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*)
 Heliotrope (*Heliotropium arborescens*)
 Lantana (*Lantana camara*)
 Melampodium (*Melampodium paludosum*)
 Flowering Tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*)
 Egyptian Star Cluster (*Penta lanceolata*)
 Petunia (*Petunia x hybrida*)
 Blue Salvia (*Salvia farinacea*)
 Mexican sunflower (*Tithonia rotundifolia*)
 Brazilian verbena (*Verbena bonariensis*)
 Zinnia (*Zinnia elegans*)

Perennials

Common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*)
Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*)
Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
Joe-Pye Weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*)
Blanket Flower (*Gaillardia x grandiflora*)
Autumn Joy Sedum (*Hylotelephium x 'Autumn Joy'*)
Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*)
Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*) also *M. fistulosa*
Goldenrod (*Solidago* hybrids)

Trees and Shrubs

Hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.)
Privet (*Ligustrum amurense*)
Fruit trees (*Prunus, Pyrus* sp.)
Lilac (*Syringa* spp.)

Sources for More Information

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