

Do you enjoy butterflies in your garden? One of the greatest treasures for providing life in the garden is the Butterfly Bush. Hummingbirds and butterflies, are seduced by the nectar-rich flowers of these bushes. Be sure to plant one in your yard.



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Butterfly Gardening



There is something magical about butterflies. No matter how old we grow they never cease to amaze and delight us. Butterflies are said to bring luck, happiness and riches. Butterflies make lovely ornaments in a garden and are easy to attract and watch, since they're active during the warm parts of the day. Your butterfly garden can be any size, from a window box planter, to a small portion of your yard, or to a large untended area on your lot.

Butterflies pay less attention to people than birds, so you can sit nearby and watch without disturbing them. Creating a butterfly garden is fun for you and rewarding for the butterflies. Butterfly hatches occur sporadically from late spring through summer, so by planting early, mid, and late season flowers and herbs, you will attract the largest number of visitors. Butterflies have a few simple needs: sunlight, nectar sources, host plants on which to lay eggs, water, basking areas and roosting areas.

Food

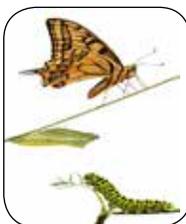
Food has to be available for both the adult butterflies, which sip nectar, and for their caterpillar offspring, which eat plants. Some of the common nectar plants for butterflies are Aster, Liatris, Coreopsis, Purple Coneflower, and Butterfly Bush. Most flowering herbs are also popular with butterflies. Try growing many different kinds of plants, so their blooming times vary both in time of day, and in the time of year.



Groups of nectar plants will be easier for butterflies to find than singly planted flowers. As a general landscaping rule, place short species in front and tall ones in back, and clump them by species and color. As butterflies search for food, they will see large splashes of color more easily than the small points of individual flowers. Butterflies are attracted to red, yellow, orange, and purple flowers. Avoid the big, showy flowers that are bred for their size because they are often a poor source of nectar, and the butterflies know it.

Caterpillars are highly selective in what they eat, and somehow butterflies know to lay eggs on the appropriate plants. If you want butterflies in your garden, you will have to tolerate caterpillars munching on your plants from time to time.

If caterpillars are eating excessive foliage from a prominent or desirable part of a plant, try moving them to the backside, or to another less noticeable portion of the plant.



If you plant some extra plants, you may not even notice the damage. Some species of butterfly larvae eat only one species of plant. The striking green, black and white-yellow caterpillar of the black swallowtail, for instance, prefers parsley, dill and fennel. Monarch butterfly caterpillars prefer milkweed. Painted Lady caterpillars love hollyhocks and thistle.

A butterfly book, or an insect guide will list various host plants. Remember, the purpose of these plants is to serve as a food source for the caterpillars. You are planting them to be eaten by the caterpillars, and eaten leaves are good signs of your butterfly garden's health and success.

Overripe fruit, allowed to sit for a few days, is a very attractive substance to them, especially pears, peaches, bananas, and watermelons. Another favorite snack is damp manure, it is useful for the minerals and the salts it provides.

Water

Like all creatures, butterflies require moisture. They also need the minerals and nutrients they get from mud and muddy water. If you don't have a naturally wet or boggy area, water the same spot in the garden every day to create a small puddle. You can also submerge a bowl of water, or a pot of wet sand in the ground, and place soil around the edges. Butterflies will sometimes gather in large groups in shallow pools of water, especially in dry or hot weather.



Protection

Locate your butterfly garden in a sunny area where it gets eight to ten hours of sunlight each day. An area that is sheltered from the wind is good for these lightweight creatures who need to bask frequently in the sun. Provide them with some flat rocks for sunning and some shady spots for resting in the heat of the day.

Butterflies have many interesting behaviors. After rain, for example, you might see them 'puddling', or sucking fluids from wet soil to obtain water and salts. On cool sunny mornings, they often bask on a rock to warm their muscles enough to power flight. Males are often territorial, chasing other males away and trying to attract females. Females have elaborate routines for choosing where to lay their eggs. With a pair of binoculars, a good field guide, a variety of flowers in bloom, and a calm sunny day, you can sit in your yard and identify many different butterfly species. If you want to attract another species, include its favorite plant in your garden.

Pesticides in the Garden

Although they are delightful to watch, butterflies are insects, so go easy on pesticides in the garden. Insecticides do not know the difference between 'good bugs' and 'bad bugs'.



'There is no butterfly without the caterpillar, and no caterpillar without suitable plants for their nourishment.'

Be aware that improper application of chemicals can upset the delicate balance of nature in the butterfly garden and wipe out your butterfly garden in an instant.



You don't have to completely eliminate chemical pesticides, but you must be very selective. **Read the label.** Don't apply chemicals above the recommended rate, or more often than the recommended frequency. Be aware of the side effects of whatever chemical you are using. It is often the 'side effects' that cause the most problems, because of their unforeseen consequences.

Time your applications of pesticides; both the time of day, and the time of season. Butterflies are not in your garden all the time, so spraying before they arrive, or after they are gone, is not detrimental to your butterflies. Do not spray at night when the butterflies are resting in your garden, they are very vulnerable to the effects of your pesticides and cannot fly away.

Butterflies (and caterpillars) are insects. Chemical insecticides such as Sevin and Malathion kill insects. Organic insecticides such as BT, Insecticidal Soap, Neem Oil, and Diatomaceous Earth, are just as deadly to butterflies and caterpillars. They are designed to kill insects that come into contact with them. They do not discriminate between harmful and beneficial insects.

So, what to do? If leaf-eating insects are nibbling on your plants ask yourself if it really matters. Can the plant spare a few leaves? Can you tolerate a few holy leaves? Why nuke your entire garden just to kill a few bad bugs?

Remember, butterflies come from caterpillars. Caterpillars eat leaves. If you kill all the leaf eating caterpillars, where will the butterflies come from?



Rules regarding pesticides:

- Less is more.** Spray the plant instead of the garden. In fact, just spray the part of the plant that the insects are after, instead of the whole plant. Only spray insecticides if you know the insects are there. Preventative spraying of insecticides is not good in butterfly gardens.
- Be tolerant.** Unless you are entering your plant in a contest, so what if something has nibbled some of the leaves.
- Be vigilant.** Walk your garden. Physically remove any pests that are unwelcome in your yard.
- Don't exceed the recommended dosage.** Doubling the strength does not help, and it may damage the leaves of the very plant you are trying to save.
- Make the plant taste bad.** Certain sprays work on the principle that if a plant that tastes bad to an insect, it won't be eaten by that insect. **Hot Pepper Wax** and **Garlic Sprays** are examples. But remember that caterpillars need to eat larval plants. Don't get carried away or you may not have butterflies either.
- Do not use systemic poisons.** These are chemicals that are placed in the ground and are taken up by the plant's roots to make the entire plant poisonous. Unfortunately, this makes the plant a killer of both beneficial and harmful insects.
- Avoid bacillus thuringiensis (BT).** This is often considered a safe organic insecticide because it doesn't harm most beneficial insects. However, it is a bacterial pathogen that kills caterpillars. Butterfly gardeners need caterpillars to make more butterflies.



8. Use a watering wand to control spider mites and aphids. A high pressure spray of water knocks these insects off the leaves without the use of any chemicals. It is amazingly effective against some insects.

9. Be selective. If thrips are attacking your roses and flowers, spray the insecticide only on the blossoms. Also, thrips usually attack just a few varieties of roses and flowers. Confine your controls to those plants that are most affected. This will minimize the odds of insecticides drifting into the 'butterfly areas' of your garden.

10. Water your plants before you spray. You will disturb the butterflies and they may fly away long enough for the pesticide to kill the unwanted pests, and then return when the pesticide is less toxic.

Plants that attract and feed butterflies

Trees and Shrubs

Butterfly Bush	Sumac	Quince
Privet	Weigela	Hawthorn
Hackberry	Lilac	Willow
Wild Cherry	Poplar	Apple
Elm		



Vines

Japanese Honeysuckle	Morning Glory
Trumpet Creeper	Wisteria
Honeysuckle	Queen Ann's Lace



Perennial Flowers

Bee Balm	Canna	Cardinal Flower	
Columbine	Four A Clocks	Hosta	Lupine
Penstemon	Yucca	Hollyhock	Primrose
Phlox	Aster	Lavender	Sedum
Black-eyed Susan	Goldenrod	Clover	Lupines
Violets	Gayfeathers	Sweet Pea	Lathyrus
Germander	Turtle Head	Chrysanthemum	Candytuft
Cone Flower	Coreopsis	Columbine	Goldenrod
Daisies	Day Lilies	False Indigo	Bee Balm
Fleabane	Foxglove	Scabiosa	Yarrow
Snapdragons	Sunflowers	Thyme	Tiger Lily
Valerian	Verbena	Violet	Veronica
Indian Paintbrush	Pincushion Flower		

Annual Flowers

Balsam	Bachelor Button	Begonia	Calendula
Beard Tongue	Fuschia	Impatiens	Petunia
Red Salvia	Cosmos	Marigold	Heliotrope
Lobelia	Zinnia	Stock	Ageratum
Verbena	Vinca	Zinnia	Alyssum

Weeds

Milkweed	Plantain	Nettle
Dandelion	Globe Thistle	

Vegetables and Herbs

Chives	Corn	Catnip
Dill	Parsley	Mint
Carrots	Bergamot	Rosemary
Sage		



More Resources

- <http://www.thebutterflysite.com/gardening.shtml>
- <http://www.in.gov/dnr/entomolo/files/gardenplants.pdf>
- <http://www.monrovia.com/design-inspiration/birds-and-butterflies/>
- <http://www.butterflywebsite.com/butterflygardening.cfm>
- <http://www.njaudubon.org/sectionbackyardhabitat/createagarden.aspx>

Butterfly Gardening Advice

1. Do not use insecticides, fungicides or herbicides.

- Most kill butterflies, caterpillars and other beneficial insects.
- Harmful insects quickly become immune anyway.
- Predatory insects (dragonflies, ladybugs) and birds may control many pests, given time. They may sometimes snack on your butterflies and caterpillars.
- Plant marigolds, petunias, mint and other herbs that naturally repel pests.



2. Choose a sunny and protected area.

- Choose an area receiving at least 5 to 6 hours of sun daily.
- Butterflies seldom feed in shade.
- Most plants favored by butterflies prefer sun to partial shade.
- Butterflies need shelter from strong winds. They are very sensitive to wind, and they do not like with even a mild breeze.

3. Plant nectar flowers for adult butterflies.

- Choose herbs, perennials and annuals so that some of the butterfly's favorite flowers will be blooming from early spring through late fall.
- Plant large areas of one species or one color.
- Native plants are usually preferred by butterflies.
- Choose flat, single or semi-double blooms. Extremely fancy blooms generally have less nectar, and are more difficult for butterflies to use.
- Deadhead (cut off dead blossoms) to keep plants flowering abundantly.

4. Plant host plants for butterfly caterpillars.

- You'll be able to observe the complete life cycle.
- Female butterflies will be drawn to your garden and encouraged to stay longer, and lay eggs.
- Without plants for caterpillars, there would be no butterflies.
- Larvae eat leaves and flowers of the host plants, but they don't usually kill the plants. Chewed foliage may be unsightly, so screen host plants from your main viewing area. Be sure you've planted enough plants to support the growing caterpillars.



5. Provide water.

- Butterflies will drink from shallow puddles and the dew on leaves.
- They will also drink and 'puddle' on damp or muddy areas.
- A sandy bottom hole, or dish filled with sand will also work, but the sand must be kept constantly moist.



6. If space is limited, try planting butterfly-attracting flowers in containers, window boxes or hanging baskets. These fun-loving insects will add bright colors and entertaining antics to your patio.

7. Provide rocks or bare soil to allow butterflies areas to bask in the sun. Butterflies fly best with a body temp of 85-100 degrees Fahrenheit. They require the sun to warm themselves to this temperature.



8. Plan before planting.

- Host plants need to be available for the larvae of the butterflies found in your area.
- Determine whether these flowers and plants prefer dry or moist conditions, and, full or partial sun.
- Plants grow: don't place large shrubs where they will block sunlight from smaller flowers.

d. Start with a few of the butterflies' favorite flowers, then add a few more.

9. Butterfly gardens attract other wildlife; birds, hummingbirds and bees.

- Bees rarely sting when feeding.
- Use common sense when working in the garden around bees.
- Butterfly gardens do not attract mice or rats. However, a gopher could show up. Rodents go where they can find food.
- Plants chosen to attract butterflies will often attract hummingbirds and moths too.



10. Protect your butterfly garden from human predators. Adults and children should be encouraged to watch and learn about butterflies and caterpillars without handling them.

11. Butterfly gardens don't need to consist exclusively of nectar and host plants. Include some of your favorite flowers and plants to make your garden unique.

12. Be patient! It may take butterflies more than one growing season to find your new garden.

Butterfly Preferences and Plants

Buckeye Butterfly

Larval food plant: snapdragon

Nectar: aster, milkweed chickory, coreopsis



Comma

Larval food plant: nettle, elm

Nectar: rotting fruit & sap, butterfly bush, dandelion



Great Swallowtail

Larval food plant: citrus trees, prickly ash

Nectar: lantana, Japanese honeysuckle, milkweed, lilac, goldenrod, azalea



Great Spangled Fritillary

Larval food plant: violet

Nectar: ironweed, milkweed, black-eyed susan, verbena



Monarch

Larval food plant: milkweed

Nectar: milkweed, butterfly bush, goldenrod, thistle, ironweed, mints



Mourning Cloak

Larval food plant: willow, elm, poplar, aspen, birch, hackberry

Nectar: rotting fruit & sap, butterfly bush, milkweed, shasta daisy



Painted Lady

Larval food plant: daisy, hollyhock

Nectar: goldenrod, aster, zinnia, butterfly bush, milkweed



Red Admiral

Larval food plant: nettle

Nectar: rotting fruit and sap, daisy, aster, goldenrod, butterfly bush, milkweed



Tiger Swallowtail

Larval food plant: cherry, ash, birch, tulip tree, lilac

Nectar: butterfly bush, milkweed, Japanese honeysuckle, phlox, lilac, ironweed



Viceroy

Larval food plant: willow, poplar, apple

Nectar: rotting fruit, sap, aster, goldenrod, milkweed

