



Attracting Butterflies

Butterfly facts

Brightly colored butterflies can be a welcome addition to your Backyard Wildlife Habitat landscape. To attract the greatest number of butterflies and have them as residents in your yard you will need to have plants that serve the needs of all life stages of the butterfly. They need a place to lay eggs, food plants for the larva (caterpillar), a place to form a chrysalis, and nectar sources for the adult.

Most adult butterflies live 10-20 days. Some, however, are believed to live no longer than three or four days, while others, such as overwintering monarchs, may live six months.

Plants That Attract Butterflies

Adults searching for nectar are attracted to:

- red, yellow, orange, pink, or purple blossoms
- flat-topped or clustered flowers
- short flower tubes

Short flower tubes allow the butterflies to reach the nectar with their proboscis. Nectar-producing plants should be grown in open, sunny areas, as adults of most species rarely feed on plants in the shade.

Many caterpillars are picky eaters. They rely on only one or two species of plants. The caterpillar of the giant swallowtail butterfly in the northeast and Mid-Atlantic States feeds on just two native plant foods - northern prickly ash and hop tree. Others, such as the red-spotted purple, will feed on a variety of deciduous trees.

NECESSITIES FOR A BUTTERFLY GARDEN:

1) Provide flowers to feed adults.

Dense "clusters" of small flowers such as zinnias, marigolds, tithonia, buddleia, milkweeds, verbenas, and many mint family plants generally work well.

2) Plant good nectar sources in the sun!

Your key butterfly nectar source plants should receive full sun from mid-morning to mid-afternoon. Butterfly adults generally feed only in the sun. If sun is limited in your landscape, try adding butterfly nectar sources to the vegetable garden.

3) No to insecticides!

Insecticides such as malathion and Sevin are marketed to kill insects. Don't use these materials in or near the butterfly garden or better, anywhere on your property. Even "benign" insecticides, such as *Bacillus thuringiensis*, are lethal to butterflies (while caterpillars).

4) Feed butterfly caterpillars.

If you don't "grow" caterpillars, there will be no adults. Bringing caterpillar foods into your garden can greatly increase your chances of attracting unusual and uncommon butterflies, while giving you yet another reason to plant an increasing variety of native plants. In many cases, caterpillars of a species feed on only a very limited variety of plants. Most butterfly caterpillars never cause the leaf damage we associate with some moth caterpillars such as bagworms, tent caterpillars, or gypsy moths.

Plants for Attracting Butterflies:

Annuals:

Ageratum	Asters	Calendula	Cosmos	Dahlia
Gaura	Impatiens	Marigolds	Phlox	
Pentas	Petunias	Stock	Verbena	Zinnias
Buddleia	Dianthus	Chamomile	Heliotrope	
Viola	Lavender	Lantana	Moonflowers	
Nasturtium	Nicotiana	Snapdragon	Sweet William	Thyme

Vines/shrubs: Morning Glory, Lilac, Dogwood, Spirea, Weigela, Honeysuckle, Pussywillow and Crabapple

Perennials:

Achillea - Yarrow
Agastache
Allium - Chives
Althaeas - Hollyhocks
Arabis spp. - Rock Cress
Aruncus dioicus - Goatsbeard
Asclepias tuberosa - Butterfly weed
Asters
Astilbe - False Spirea
Aubrietia deltoidea- Purple Rock Cress
Aurinia sazafile - Perennial Alyssum
Baptisia australis- False indigo
Chelone glabra - Turtlehead
Centaurea- Bachelor Button
Cimicifuga - Bugbane
Coreopsis - Tickseed
Dianthus - Pinks and Sweet Williams
Digitalis purpurea - Foxglove
Echinacea - Coneflower
Erigeron - Fleabane
Gaillardia - Blanket Flower
Henlenium autumnale – Helen’s Flower
Hemerocallis - Daylilies
Heuchera - Coralbells
Iberis sempervirens - Candytuft
Lavandula angustifolia
Lobelia cardinalis
Monarda didyma - Bee Balm
Nepeta mussinii - Catmint
Oenothera - Evening primrose
Phlox - Phlox
Penstemon digitalis
Rudbeckia - Black Eyed Susan
Sedum - Stonecrop
Scabiosa - Pincushion Plant
Veronica - Speedwell
Viola- Violets