

Green Thumb Greenhouse

Attracting Butterflies

Butterflies are attracted to a garden by flowers that are rich in nectar. Nectar is the sweet liquid produced by flowers to attract insects and birds that are essential for pollination. Attracting the adult butterflies by planting the right plants is the first step. When possible, locate the plants in a sunny, protected area. Butterflies need the sun to stay warm. Avoid using any pesticides in the area. They will need a source of water too. Shallow birdbaths, saucers or puddles are perfect. While the adult butterflies feed on nectar, their hungry caterpillars will need leaves of the right plants for their food. Sometimes the same plant attracts them with the flowers and provides food for the caterpillars, but not always. If you are trying to encourage a specific type of butterfly to complete its life cycle in your garden, you can find books that will tell you what to plant to provide all the needs of that variety of butterfly. For instance, black swallowtails will be attracted to various flowers in your garden but they will only complete their life cycle there if you are growing dill or parsley for their caterpillars to eat. It will also be important to learn to identify the caterpillar stages of the butterflies so you won't accidentally destroy them. Unfortunately, not all the beautiful butterflies live in our area, but there are quite a few.

The life cycle of various butterflies will differ, but the basics are the same. First an egg is laid by an adult on a plant that will be a source of food for the caterpillar. The egg hatches into a larva (we call it a caterpillar). As the larva grows, it can go through several stages before it reaches the pupa stage and forms the pupa case called the chrysalis. After its metamorphosis, the chrysalis splits open and the butterfly will emerge. Most varieties stick around for the winter, hibernating as adults in the deep fissures on the bark of trees. Monarch butterflies actually migrate like birds. The butterfly houses that are available are constructed with narrow slits that only allow butterflies to enter and provide a sheltered place for them to winter or rest.

Butterflies are attracted to a few other sources of food in addition to nectar and water. Plants that produce fruit that often falls and rots are a great source of food. Watch carefully and you may see butterflies feeding on tree sap that is dripping from a cut or break. People can provide food for them too. When you have fruit that gets too ripe for you to eat, try putting it out in a dish for the butterflies. To encourage fermentation and make the fruit even more attractive, pour beer over the cut surfaces of the fruit. If you don't have beer, make a mixture of water, sugar and a little yeast.

Trees and Shrubs That Attract Butterflies

All Fruit Trees

Maple *Acer*

Horse Chestnut *Aesculus*

Moonbeam Coreopsis *Coreopsis v.*

Coneflower *Echinacea*

Globe Thistle *Echinops*

Joe Pye Weed *Eupatorium*

Blanket Flower *Gaillardia*

Alder *Alnus*
Redbud *Cercis*
Pagoda Dogwood *Cornus*
Gray Dogwood *Cornus*
Hawthorne *Crataegus*
Weeping Willow *Salix*
Tree Lilac *Syringia*
Elm *Ulmus*

All Fruiting Shrubs

Serviceberry *Amelanchier*
Butterfly Bush *Buddleia*
Clethra *Clethra*
Mockorange *Philadelphus*
Potentilla *Potentilla*
Pussy Willow *Salix*
Spirea *Spiraea*
Lilac *Syringia*
Wayfaring Bush *Viburnum*
Weigela *Weigela*

Plants That Attract Butterflies

Annuals

Ageratum *Ageratum*
Pot Marigold *Calendula*
Spider Flower *Cleome*
Cosmos *Cosmos*
Sweet William *Dianthus*
Dianthus *Dianthus*
Heliotrope *Heliotropium*
Impatiens *Impatiens*
Lantana *Lantana*
Lobelia *Lobelia*
Sweet Alyssum *Lobularia*
Flowering Tobacco *Nicotiana*
Pentas *Pentas*
Marigold *Tagetes*
Mexican Sunflower *Tithonia*
Verbena *Verbena*
Zinnia *Zinnia*

Perennials

Yarrow *Achillea*
Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*
Columbine *Aquilegia*
Butterfly Weed *Asclepias t.*
Swamp Milkweed *Asclepias. i*
Rock Cress *Arabis*
Thrift *Armeria*

Perennial Sunflower *Heliopsis*
Candytuft *Iberis*
Lavender *Lavandula*
Shasta Daisies *Leucanthemum*
Gayfeather *Liatris*
Lilies, *Lilium*
Lupine *Lupinus*
Bee Balm *Monarda*
Catmint *Nepeta*
Peony *Paeonia*
Garden Phlox *Phlox*
Obedient Plant *Physostegia*
Meadow Sage *Salvia*
Autumn Joy Sedum *Sedum*
Goldenrod *Solidago*
Back-eyed Susan *Rudbeckia*
Ornamental Grasses

Herbs

Chives *Allium*
Dill *Anethum g.*
Borage *Borago o.*
Fennel *Foeniculum*
Mint *Mentha*
Oregano *Origanum*
Parsley *Petroselinum*
Rue *Ruta*

Wildflowers

Dandelions *Taraxacum*
Hawkweed *Heracium*
Clover *Trifolium*
Butterfly Weed *Asclepias t.*
Oxeye Daisy *Leucanthemum*
Milkweed *Asclepias*
Mountain Mint *Pycnanthemum*
Queen Anne's Lace *Daucus carota*
Thistle *Cirsium*
Vetch *Vicia*
Bergamot/Oswego Tea *Monarda .*

Fall Asters *Aster*
Joe-Pye Weed *Eupatorium*
Beggars Ticks *Bidens aristosa*
Boneset *Eupatorium perfo.*
Goldenrod *Solidago*
Ironweed *Vernonia*