# **Gardening for Butterflies**

Butterflies are delightful living jewels that beautify any garden. With a little planning, you can create a garden that welcomes butterflies in all their life stages for enjoyment throughout the summer.

Planting flowers that supply adult butterflies with nectar will attract some butterflies to your garden, but to attract and keep many different species to enjoy you'll have to include host plants also. What are host plants? They are the plants that female butterflies lay their eggs on the hatch into caterpillars. Each species of butterfly has specific plant or plants that nourish the growing caterpillar and they cannot survive on any other plant. Your host plants will be eaten by the caterpillars, so remember not to worry about holes on the leaves-and no pesticides unless absolutely unavoidable (see below).

#### **Host Plants**

There are many host plants already in or near your landscape if you live near natural areas like woods or meadows. Several commonly planted ornamental plants are also host plants and may already be in your garden.

## **Annual and Perennial Butterfly Host Plants**

African Marigold (Tagetes erecta) Parsley (Petroselenium spp.)

Passionflower Alfalfa, Clover

Aster spp. Queen Anne's Lace (Daucus carota)

Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia fulgida) Rock Cress (Arabis spp.) Cabbage Sedum spectabile

Citrus Showy Milkweed (Asclepias speciosa)

Common Milkweed (Asclepias syriaca) Snapdragon (Antirrhinum spp.) Dill (Anethum graveolens) Sunflower (Helianthus spp.)

French Marigold (Tagetes patula) Swamp Milkweed (Asclepias incarnate)

Sweet William (Dianthus barbatus) Hollyhock (Alcea spp.) Lupine (Lupinus spp.)

## **Tree & Shrub Butterfly Host Plants**

PawPaw (Asimina triloba) Black willow (Salix nigra) Poplar (Populus spp.)

Boxelder (Acer negundo) Spicebush (Lindea benzoin)

Sycamore (Platanus occidentalis)

Wild Cherry (Prunus serotina)

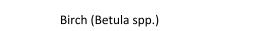
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Elm (Ulmus spp.)

Hawthorn (Cratagus spp.)

Oak (Quercus spp.)





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#### **Nectar Plants**

Adult butterflies drink nectar from flowers, and having a selection of nectar plants that bloom in succession throughout the season will bring butterflies to your garden. Annuals tend to have longer bloom times than perennials. Look for "old fashioned" varieties and single flowers instead of double flowered forms. Look in the seed section for plants suitable for butterflies. Butterflies prefer mass plantings of a variety to single plants, and also favor purple, lavender & pink flowers (but other colors will attract butterflies also). You'll see that some plants are both host plants and nectar plants, so plant plenty of those!

### **Annual and Perennial Butterfly Nectar Plants**

Achillea (Achillea millefolium) Goldenrod (Solidago spp.)

African Marigold (Tagetes erecta) Heliotrope (Heliotropium arborescens)

Aster (Aster spp.)

Joe Pye Weed (Eupatorium maculatum)

Bee Balm (Monarda spp.)

Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia fulgida)

Mallow (Alcea spp.)

Blanketflower (Gaillardia x grandiflora) Mexican Sunflower (Tithonia rotundifolia)

Daylily (Hemerocallis spp.) Milkweed (Asclepias spp.)

French Marigold (Tagetes patula) Mints (Mentha spp.)

Gayfeather/Blazing Star (Litaris spp.) Mountain Bluet (Centaurea montana)
Globe Thistle (Echinops ritro) Nasturtium (Tropaeoleum majus)
Gloriosa Daisy (Rudbeckia hirta) Oxeye Daisy (Heliopsis helianthoides)

Pussy Willow (Salix discolor)

# **Tree & Shrub Butterfly Nectar Plants**

Black Willow (Salix nigra) Sweet Pepperbush (Clethera alnifolia)

Coralberry (Symphoricarpus orbiculatus) Butterfly Bush (Buddleia spp.)

Korean Lilac (Syringa meyeri, S. patula) Bluebeard (Caryopteris clandonensis)

Mock Orange (Philadelphus coronarius) Tropical Hibiscus (Hibiscus roseo-sinensis)

Plum, Cherry (Prunus spp.)

Azalea (Rhododendron spp.)

#### Other ways to attract butterflies

- Protect your butterfly garden from strong wind by creating it near a wall, fence or other windbreak.
- Provide a patch or pot of damp sand. Butterflies cannot drink from open water like birdbaths but can drink from very shallow puddles or damp areas.
- ♦ Provide basking stones. Butterflies are cold-blooded and need the sun's rays to warm up enough to fly on cool mornings.

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- ♦ Leave some areas of your property "natural" if possible to provide wild host and nectar plants a place to grow.
- Make a butterfly feeder (a fun kid's project): Drill a small hole in the lid of a small jar. Plug the hole with cotton. Fill the jar with a solution of one part table sugar (not honey) to nine parts water. Decorate the lid with colorful "petals" and hang in a tree near your butterfly garden.

#### **Controlling Insect Pests in your Butterfly Garden**

Wherever possible, avoid using pesticides in your butterfly garden. If other insects become a problem you must deal with, treat only the areas affected with insecticidal soaps or oils. These will harm caterpillars if they are sprayed directly, so be precise. Often, there are insects such as spiders, lacewings, ladybird beetles, and ground beetles that actually help to control unwanted pests, especially if you avoid using pesticides.

#### **Butterfly Houses**

Occasionally, a butterfly may take refuge in your butterfly house, but most will prefer to hide in natural areas, under loose tree bark, in tall unmowed grass and undisturbed brush piles. Enjoy your butterfly house as a garden ornament, but don't be disappointed if butterflies don't take up residence.

Note: To find a larger list of butterfly plants, try our <u>PlantFinder's</u> Advanced Search, in any category, select plant type and set "Wildlife Attraction" to "Butterflies".)