

Butterfly Gardens

A Garden Guide

To the ancient Grecians, the butterfly was the emblem of the human soul. Certainly one of the joys of having a garden is seeing the butterflies visit. Perhaps you have noticed that some gardens attract more butterflies than others. This is usually because these gardens contain more flowers that are rich in the **nectar** that butterflies drink. It may also indicate that there are more plants in the area on which butterfly caterpillars feed (**host** plants). By choosing the correct plants, you can attract many different species to your garden, and it will be all the more beautiful and fascinating because of these delicate, transcendent creatures.

Most butterfly-attracting plants require bright sunshine; the butterflies themselves need sun to warm their wings for flight and to orient themselves. Butterflies are first attracted to flowers by their color. Many native butterflies seem to prefer **purple, yellow, orange, and red-colored blossoms**. Clusters of short, tubular flowers or flat-topped blossoms provide the ideal shapes on which butterflies can land and feed. The nectar of single flowers is more accessible and easier for butterflies to extract than the nectar of double flowers. Butterflies need nectar for energy, and although they will range all about the neighborhood, they will always return to an attractive nectar source.



Butterflies are active from early spring until late fall. To keep them coming to your garden, plan your plants to provide a **succession of bloom** – and therefore a source of nectar – throughout the growing season (e.g., spring: Azaleas, summer: Buddleia, fall: Chrysanthemums, etc.). The inclusion of host plants in or on the periphery of the garden provides food for caterpillars, and lures the female butterflies into the garden to lay eggs. For example, the caterpillar of the Black Swallowtail is green and yellow and feeds on the host plant, parsley. Many people mistakenly think this caterpillar is a “pest” – don’t kill them!

Butterflies need **shelter** from a prevailing wind; it is difficult for them to fly if they are buffeted about. A wind-breaking hedge or in a row of trees can also serve as a place to roost for the night and provide protection from predators.

Butterflies also need an occasional drink of **water**, but since they cannot drink from open water, a birdbath-type facility won’t work. Some butterflies drink and extract

salts from moist soil. If there isn't a sunny, damp area or shallow puddle nearby, you can provide one by burying a small basin in the soil and filling it with sand or earth and water. A few rocks or flat stones will afford perching spots for the butterflies to spread their wings and bask in the sun. Basking raises their body temperature so they are able to fly and remain active.

DO NOT USE PESTICIDES IN OR NEAR A BUTTERFLY GARDEN. Most traditional garden pesticides are toxic to butterflies. Use predatory insects, insecticidal soap, or hand-remove pests if problems occur. Even organic pesticides can negatively impact butterflies.

NECTAR SOURCES

Annuals and Biennials

Ageratum sp. – 8-16", sun to ½ day sun
Cosmos sp. – 24-48", sun to ½ day sun
Dianthus sp. – Annual types, 8-12", sun to ½ day sun
Gazania sp. – 8", sun to ½ day sun
Heliotrope sp. – Fragrant Heliotrope, 12-16", sun to ½ day sun
Impatiens sp. – 8-16", ½ day sun to shade
Lantana sp. – 12-16", sun to ½ day sun
Mallow sp. – 24-36", sun
Marigold sp. – 6-24", sun to ½ day sun
Nasturtium sp. – 8-12", sun to ½ day sun
Pentas sp. – 16-24", sun to ½ day sun
Petunia sp. – 8-12", sun to ½ day sun
Salvia sp. – Pineapple Sage, 24-36", sun
Sunflowers – 24-72", sun
Sweet Alyssum – 4-6", sun to ½ day sun

Tithonia sp. – Mexican Sunflower, 36-60", sun to ½ day sun
Verbena sp. – Moss Verbena, 4-6", sun to ½ day sun
Verbena sp. – 6", sun to ½ day sun
Viola sp. – sun to ½ day sun
Zinnia sp. – 8-24", sun

Spring Perennials

Alyssum sp. – Basket of Gold, 12", sun
Arabis sp. – Rock Cress, 12-24", sun
Armeria sp. – Sea pink, 6-8", sun to ½ day sun
Aubrieta sp. – Rock Cress, 12", sun
Dianthus barbatus – Sweet William, 8-12", sun to ½ day sun
Iberis sp. – Candy Tuft, 8-10", sun to part sun
Lupine sp. – 18-24", sun to ½ day sun
Phlox subulata – Thrift, 4-6" sun to ½ day sun
Polemonium sp. – Jacob's Ladder, 16-24", sun to ½ day sun
Thalictrum sp. – Meadow Rue, 24", sun to ½ day sun

Summer Perennials

Achillea sp. – Yarrow, 16-36", sun
Alcea sp. – Hollyhock, 36-60", sun to ½ day sun
Astilbe sp. – False Spirea, 12-24", ½ day sun to shade
Asclepias spp. – 24-60", sun
Buddleia sp. – Butterfly Bush, 4-6', sun to ½ day sun
Campanula sp. – Bellflower, 12-36", sun to ½ day sun
Caryopteris sp. – Blue Mist Shrub, 24", sun

Chrysanthemum sp. – 12-36", sun to ½ day sun

Coreopsis sp. – Tickseed, 12-24", sun

Hesperis sp. – Dame's Rocket, 12-18", sun to ½ day sun

Gaillardia sp. – Blanket Flower, 12-24" sun

Germander sp. – 12-16", sun to ½ day sun

Liatris sp. – Gayfeather, 24-36", sun

Lysimachia clethroides – Gooseneck, 24", sun to ½ day sun

Monarda sp. – Beebalm, 24-36", sun to part shade

Phlox paniculata – Garden Phlox, 36-48", sun to ½ day sun

Santolina sp. – Lavender Cotton, 12", sun

Salvia spp. – Perennial Salvia, 16", sun to ½ day sun

Stokesia sp. – Stokes Aster, 12", sun to ½ day sun

Verbena canadensis – Homestead Purple, 6", sun to ½ day sun

Verbena bonariensis – 36-48", sun

Late summer and Autumn Perennials

Anemone japonica – Japanese Anemone, 12-16", ½ day sun

Aster syn. *Symphyotrichum* – New England, 12-36", sun

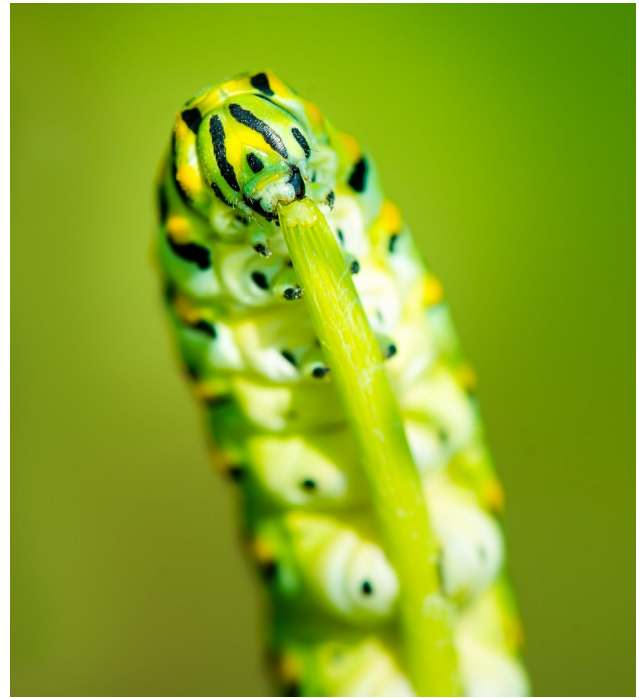
Chrysanthemum sp. – Fall Blooming mums, 12-36", sun

Echinacea purpurea – Coneflower, 24-36", sun

Eupatorium syn. *Eutrochium* sp. – Joe Pye Weed, 18-60", sun

Rudbeckia sp. – Black-eyed Susan, 12-36", sun

Sedum sp. – Sedum Autumn Joy, 16-24", sun to ½ day Sun



Insect Host Plants

Alcea rosea – Hollyhock, 36-72", sun

Allium sp. – Chives, 12", sun

Anethum sp. – Dill, 24-36", sun

Asclepias spp. – 24-60", sun to ½ day sun

Aster syn. *Symphyotrichum* – 12-36", sun

Daucus sp. – Queen Anne's Lace, 24-36", sun to ½ day sun

Foeniculum sp. – Fennel, 36-48", sun to ½ day sun

Helianthus sp. – Sunflowers, 12-72" sun

Leucanthemum superbum – Shasta Daisy, 8-36", sun

Lupinus sp. – 12-24", sun to ½ day sun

Parthenium integrifolium – Wild Quinine, 2-4', sun

Passiflora sp. – Passion Flower Vine, 6-10', sun

Petroselinum sp. – Parsley, 8-12", sun

Ruta sp. – Rue, 24", sun

Solidago sp. – Goldenrod, 16-36", sun to ½ day sun

Trifolium sp. – Clover, 6-12", sun to ½ day sun

Vernonia sp. – Ironweed, 24-72", sun

SHRUBS

(Some are used for nectar, some
As host plants – many both.)

SPRING-BLOOMING

Amelanchier sp. – Serviceberry

Aronia sp. – Chokeberry

Callicarpa americana – Beautyberry

Calycanthus sp. – Carolina Allspice

Itea virginica – Virginia Sweetspire

Ilex glabra – Inkberry Holly

Ilex opaca – American Holly

Physocarpus opulifolius – Ninebark

Spirea spp. – Meadowsweets

Syringa vulgaris – Lilac

Rhododendron spp. – Azalea

Viburnum spp.

SUMMER

Abelia x grandiflora – Glossy Abelia

Aesculus spp. – Buckeye

Clerodendrum sp. – Harlequin Glorybower,
4-10', sun

Clethra sp. – Summersweet

Cotoneaster spp.

Hibiscus syriacus – Rose of Sharon

Hydrangea arborescens – Smooth

Hydrangea

Hydrangea quercifolia – Oakleaf Hydrangea

Kalmia latifolia – Mountain Laurel

Lindera benzoin – Spicebush

Philadelphus spp. – Mock Orange

Potentilla fruticosa – Bush Cinquefoil

Spirea spp. – Meadowsweets

Syringa spp. – Lilac

Viburnum dentatum – Arrowwood

Vitex agnus-castus – Chaste Tree

TREES

(Used mostly as larval sources, i.e., host
Plants – rarely for nectar.)

Acer sp. – Maple

Asimina triloba – Pawpaw

Betula spp. – Birch

Carpinus spp. – Hornbeam

Cercis canadensis – Redbud

Crataegus spp. – Hawthorn

Cornus florida – Dogwood

Fagus grandifolia – American Beech

Halesia sp. – Carolina Silverbell

Hamamelis sp. – Witch Hazel

Liriodendron tulipifera – Tulip Poplar

Liquidambar styraciflua – Sweet Gum

Magnolia sp. – Magnolia

Malus sp. – Apple, Crabapple

Quercus sp. – Oak

Salix spp. – Willow

By following the tips given, anyone can create a garden that is attractive to butterflies. It could be as small as a single pot, to large, gardening wonders. With a little preplanning, you'll soon be on your way!

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