



Butterfly Gardens : Flying Flowers!

planting to attract butterflies

- Butterflies feed on nectar; good sources of this food will attract them to your garden. Include flowers that bloom at different times so your garden provides nectar from spring through autumn. September and October are particularly important months, as butterflies will be desperately searching for any nectar sources that will help them prepare for winter.
- Clump plants together 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 particularly attracted to red, orange, yellow, and purple flowers.
- The standard and older versions of nectar plants are usually the best choices for butterflies. They have big, simple flower heads which provide easy access to nectar. Avoid big, showy flowers bred for size; they are often poor nectar sources.
- Include native plants in your garden. These plants have evolved alongside their pollinator partners, attracting a wide variety of butterflies. They also tend to be more durable and dependable than hybridized cultivars.
- Create a “wild” patch in your garden. Many plants we call weeds, such as clover and dandelions, are attractive to butterflies.

planting to attract caterpillars

- If you want to support a full butterfly life cycle you must also include host plants in your garden. Butterflies will lay their eggs on these host plants and their caterpillars will feed on the leaves once they have emerged.
- Butterfly larvae must feed on specific plants and females adult butterflies will lay their eggs only on these plants. This specificity is so strong that most caterpillars will starve to death if they cannot find their host plants soon after emerging from the egg. Research the butterfly you would like to attract and then plant accordingly (please see *Butterfly Plant List*).
- Remember that the purpose of these plants is to serve as a food source for the caterpillars. Leaves will be eaten. This is a sign of your garden’s success as a welcome (and necessary!) haven for butterflies.

garden design and maintenance

- A butterfly garden can be any size but it needs to be located in a sunny and open area with some protection from wind.
- Butterflies need the sun to warm their blood and flight muscles. You can create basking sites for your butterflies by placing large, flat, light-colored rocks in sunny areas. Brick, cement and gravel also work well.
- In addition to nectar, butterflies need minerals and water. Butterflies will not drink from open water. They get the moisture and minerals they need from moist areas around water in a process called “puddling.” You can create your own puddles with a shallow container that holds water. Bury the container in a sunny spot that is out of the wind and near the nectar plants. Fill it almost to the top with wet sand. Add a few twigs or rocks on top of the sand for perches.
- Butterflies spend more than half of their day at rest. This is called roosting. They find a roost in the early afternoon and will then spend the night there. They will also roost during cold or wet weather. Planting a variety of trees, shrubs and grasses will give your butterflies a wide range of roosting options at various heights.
- As you maintain your garden, it is important for you to limit (or eliminate) the use of herbicides, insecticides and pesticides. Even those labeled as “organic” can kill butterflies and caterpillars. Read labels carefully, and follow all instructions.
- The North American Butterfly Association is a great resource: <http://nababutterfly.com/>. As plant growers, Bowood Farms supports “Bring Back the Monarchs” campaign/Monarch Waystation Program: find out more at <http://monarchwatch.org/>.