

Attracting Butterflies



Butterflies are not only beautiful visitors to our gardens but great pollinators and important members of our eco-system. To attract butterflies to your garden you need to create a comfortable environment for the whole life cycle of a butterfly from caterpillar to adult. You'll need three basic elements; caterpillar food, butterfly food and a comfortable physical environment.

Caterpillar Food

Butterflies lay their eggs on plants that will become a food source for the growing caterpillars. Some caterpillars like to eat specific plants. For example, the monarch butterfly feed on milkweed plants and yellow swallowtails eat only parsley. Any damage caused by caterpillars is small and temporary. Many trees, perennials, herbs and vegetables make good caterpillar food

Yarrow
Hollyhock
Snapdragon
Aster
Bleeding Heart
Foxglove
Fennel
Sunflower
Toadflax
Sweet Alyssum
Penstemon
Veronica
Wisteria
Strawberry
Lilac
Hibiscus
Currant
Roses
Spirea
Viburnum
Potentilla
Milkweed
Parsley

Butterfly Food

Butterflies drink nectar, the sweet liquid inside a flower. Butterflies are attracted to bright, fragrant flowers that give them enough room to sit on.

In a sunny area, plant a variety of nectar rich flowers in close clumps to encourage adult butterflies to feed.

Try to have a variety of different flowers with different blooming times to attract a wider variety of butterflies.

Yarrow
Lilly-Of-The-Nile
Snapdragon
Columbine
Butterfly Weed
Aster
Astilbe
Jupiter's Beard
Shasta Daisy
Coreopsis
Cosmos
Delphinium
Dianthus
Echinacea
Globe Thistle
Gaillardia
Candytuft
Lobelia
Sweet Alyssum
Bee Balm
Oregano
Beard Tongue
Phlox
Ranunculus
Rudbeckia
Sage
Scabiosa
Sedum
Marigold
Verbena
Butterfly Bush
Lilac
Lantana
Lavendar
Honeysuckle
Mahonia
Mock Orange
Potentilla
Sumac
Currant
Rosemary
Spirea
Zinnia

Comfortable Environment

Now that your butterfly visitors have food, they'll want a comfortable place to stay. Most butterflies like some protection from the wind in the form of trees, shrubs or grasses. These are also perfect spots for them to roost on cool, cloudy days. They also like open areas with lots of sun. Many adult male butterflies like to congregate near open, wet, sandy areas or puddles. Scientists don't know the exact reason for these "mud puddle clubs", but they think that the butterflies get important moisture and minerals from the water. A pile of rocks in a sheltered part of the garden also gives butterflies a place to warm up on sunny days.

Maple
Apple Trees
Willow
Butterfly Bush
Lantana
Lavender
Honeysuckle
Mexican Feathergrass
Dogwood
Birch
Flowering Crabapple