

Butterfly Gardening



Life Cycle

Butterflies develop through a process known as complete metamorphosis, where they have four distinct life stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Each stage is drastically different than the previous one, and each has a specific purpose. The **egg** contains the developing larva (or caterpillar), whose only job upon hatching is to feed and grow. When the **larva** has reached its maximum size, it will enter the **pupal** stage. During this nearly motionless period, the entire internal structure of the insect is rearranged and rebuilt to create the **adult** animal. The main task of these winged adults is to breed. Usually, once they have reproduced and laid eggs, the adults die; only a few of our local butterflies live longer to migrate south for the winter.

Each female butterfly can lay hundreds of eggs, but it is rare that enough survive to cause any major damage. Populations are kept in check naturally by parasites, predatory insects, weather, and birds. Butterflies face their greatest threat from humans; construction destroying open fields, woods, and streams shrinks vital butterfly habitats. Pesticides sprayed to kill unsightly weeds or to clear rights-of-way can kill off the very weeds that are important larval food.

Elements of the Butterfly Garden

Butterfly gardening is a rewarding activity and need not require tremendous effort or space. To entice these beauties to visit your garden, only a few simple guidelines are needed.

Food for Adults

Flight takes up large amounts of energy, and the primary source of energy for most butterflies comes from nectar. The greater the variety of flower colors, shapes, and sizes you can incorporate, the wider the variety of butterflies that will be attracted. A few butterflies supplement their diet with, or actually prefer, calories from other sources, like overripe fruit, tree sap, and even animal dung.

Water

Just like with nectar, butterflies drink while landed, so a shallow birdbath or the neutral edge of a pond—where they can sit out of water—will allow them to sip without drowning. In a behavior called “mud-puddling,” some species will seek out puddles in wet clay or sand to drink the butterfly version of vitamin water; the minerals and salts in the water provide nutrients that nectar might not. Usually males are found mud-puddling because they need more of those nutrients to breed than the females do.

Basking

Butterflies, like all insects, are cold-blooded and don't have the energy to fly unless they are sufficiently warm. Spots of sunlight where they can spread their wings and warm up will help them get active in your garden.

Shelter

Hiding from predators and hunkering down in inclement weather will be easier for your resident butterflies if you give them shelter, such as from nearby evergreens.

Food for Larvae – Host Plants

These are the plants the caterpillars need to eat, and they are almost always different than the plants the adults use for nectar. Once mated, female butterflies spend much of their time laying eggs. Because they are so selective in the particular species of plants their young will eat, having some next to the flowers will make your plantings all the more welcoming. If you have concerns about you guests defoliating you yard, there is no need to worry. As previously mentioned, predators will keep numbers down. In the case of those butterflies that share our food, a couple of plants can be set aside for their consumption. This way, should you wish to spray you vegetables for other pests, the young won't be harmed.

Basic Butterfly Families

Swallowtails — large, with tails on hind wings

Milkweed — only the Monarch in our area

Whites & Sulphurs — smaller; mostly white or yellow

Brush-Footed — large, diverse group; usually mid-size; include Admirals, Ladies, Anglewings, Fritillaries, Checkerspots, Crescentspots, Tortoiseshells, and Longwings

Snouts — very small family; only one species locally

Gossamer Wings — small; includes Coppers, Blues, Hairstreaks, and Elfins

Metalmarks — small; few local species

Satyrs — include Wood Nymphs, Ringlets, Alpines, and Arctics

Skippers — somewhat moth-like, and include Folded-wing and Spread-wing groups

The following is a comprehensive list of plants that will attract butterflies to your garden, including both nectar source plants for adults and host plants for larvae.

Annuals, Vegetables and Herbs

nectar source	host plant	botanical name	common name
X		Ageratum houstonianum	Ageratum
X	X	Asteraceae / Compositae	Daisy Family (daisies, mums, asters, gazania, sunflowers)
X		Cosmos bipinnatus	Cosmos
X	X	Cruciferae / Brassicaceae	Mustard Family (cabbage, kale, broccoli, cress)
	X	Helichrysum	Curry, Licorice Plant
X		Heliotropium arborescens	Heliotrope
X		Impatiens waterana	Impatiens
X		Lantana camara	Lantana
X		Limonium	Statice
X		Lobelia	Lobelia
X		Lobularia maritima	Alyssum
X		Mentha	Mint
	X	Passiflora	Passionflower
X		Pentas	Pentas, Starflower
X		Tagetes	Marigold
X	X	Tropaeolum	Nasturtium
	X	Umbelliferae	Carrot Family (dill, fennel, parsley)
X		Verbena hybrida	Verbena
	X	Viola	Pansies, Violas, Violets
X		Zinnia	Zinnia

Perennials

nectar source	host plant	botanical name	common name
X		Achillea	Yarrow
X		Agastache foeniculum	Anise Hyssop
X		Allium	Ornamental Onion
X		Aurinaria saxatilis	Alyssum, Basket-of-Gold
X	X	Arabis	Rock Cress
X	X	Asclepias	Milkweed, Butterfly Weed
X	X	Aster	Aster
X	X	Aubrieta	Rock Cress
	X	Baptisia	False Indigo, Wild Indigo
	X	Cassia	Senna

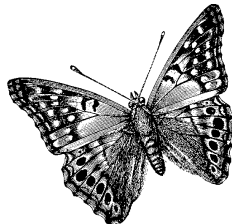
Perennials (cont.'d)

nectar source	host plant	botanical name	common name
X		Centaurea	Cornflower
X		Centranthus	Red Valerian, Jupiter's Beard
	X	Chelone	Turtlehead
X		Coreopsis	Tickseed
X		Echinacea	Coneflower
X		Echinops	Globe Thistle
X		Eupatorium	Joe-Pye Weed, Mistflower
X		Gaillardia	Blanket Flower
X		Helenium	Sneezeweed
X		Helianthus	Sunflower
X		Heliopsis	False Sunflower, Oxeye
X		Hemerocallis	Daylily
X		Lavendula	Lavender
X		Leucanthemum	Shasta Daisy
X		Liatris	Gayfeather, Blazing Star
X		Lilium	Lily
X		Lobelia	Lobelia, Cardinal Flower
	X	Lupinus	Lupine
	X	Malva	Mallow
X		Monarda	Beebalm, Bergamot
X		Nepeta	Catmint
X		Oreganum laevigatum	Oregano
	X	Penstemon hirsutus	Hairy Beardtongue
X		Phlox	Phlox
X		Prunella	Self-Heal
X		Pycnanthemum	Mountain Mint
X		Rudbeckia	Black-Eyed Susan
	X	Rumex	Dock, Sorrel
X		Salvia	Sage
X		Scabiosa	Pincushion Flower
X		Sedum	Stonecrop
X		Senecio	Ragwort
X		Solidago	Goldenrod
X		Thymus	Thyme
X		Verbena	Verbena
X		Vernonia	Ironweed
X		Veronica	Speedwell
	X	Viola	Violet
	X	Zizia	Golden Alexander



Trees, Shrubs and Vines

nectar source	host plant	botanical name	common name
X		Abelia x grandiflora	Glossy Abelia
	X	Aristolochia	Pipevine, Dutchman's Pipe
X		Aronia	Chokeberry
	X	Asimina triloba	Pawpaw
X		Buddleia	Butterfly Bush
X		Caryopteris x clandonensis	Blue Mist Shrub
	X	Celtis occidentalis	Hackberry
X		Cephalanthus occidentalis	Button Bush
X		Cercis canadensis	Redbud
X		Clethra alnifolia	Summersweet, Sweet Pepperbush
X		Cotoneaster	Cotoneaster
	X	Fagus	Beech
	X	Fraxinus	Ash
X		Hibiscus syriacus	Rose-of-Sharon
	X	Juniperus virginiana	Eastern Redcedar
	X	Lindera benzoin	Spicebush
	X	Liriodendron tulipifera	Tulip Poplar
X		Lonicera	Honeysuckle
	X	Magnolia virginiana	Sweetbay Magnolia
X		Physocarpus	Ninebark
	X	Populus	Poplar
	X	Prunus	Cherry, Cherry Laurel, Plum
	X	Quercus	Oak
	X	Salix	Willow
X		Sambucus canadensis	Elderberry
	X	Sassafras albidum	Sassafras
X		Syringa	Lilac
	X	Ulmus	Elm



Wildflowers and "Weeds"

nectar source	host plant	botanical name	common name
	X	Agalinis	False Foxgloves
X	X	Anaphalis margaritacea	Pearly Everlasting
	X	Antennaria	Pussytoes
X	X	Apocynum	Dogbanes
X	X	Asclepias	Milkweeds
X	X	Asteraceae / Compositae	Aster Family (aster, goldenrod, sunflower, boneset, daisy)
	X	Boehmeria cylindica	False Nettle
	X	Carex	Sedges
X	X	Cirsium discolor	Field Thistle
X	X	Fabaceae / Legumimosae	Pea Family (false & wild indigos, peas, tick trefoils, senna)
	X	Laportea canadensis	Wood Nettle
	X	Poaceae	Grass Family
X	X	Spiraea latifolia	Meadowsweet
X		Verbena hastata	Vervain
X		Veronicastrum virginica	Culver's Root



Your Notes:



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