



**FYN Garden Q & A Series**

**Thomas Becker**  
**Extension Agent, Florida**  
**Yards & Neighborhoods**



## FYN Topic: Native Plants for Butterflies

:

**Question:** Do all native plants attract butterflies? What about perennial peanut? Via email

**Answer:** In general butterflies are attracted to many different native flowering plants as nectar sources. Not every native wildflower is preferred by every butterfly nor supplies easy access to its nectar. Of those that do, choose only those plants recommended for southwest Florida landscapes. In some cases, non-native plants like perennial peanut (*Arachis glabrata*) grow well here and will attract certain butterflies. Perennial peanut is both a host plant for the barred yellow and the barred sulphur butterfly and a nectar source for swallowtails (all types).

But, butterflies need to find more than just nectar plants. For the species to survive, “Host” plant types must be present mostly in preserved areas and butterfly gardens. Each type of butterfly selects a certain host plant in order to lay eggs for the next generation. Host plants become the ratty-looking food sources for a butterfly’s larval caterpillar. Expect to see some host plants stripped bare in a butterfly garden. Examples include Monarch caterpillars feed only on milkweed, and Zebra Longwing and Gulf fritillaries caterpillars feed on passionvine exclusively.

If you want butterflies to visit your butterfly garden, you will need both host and nectar plants. Learn more at Southwest Florida Butterfly Conference held annually at the Lee County Extension Office at Terry Park in Fort Myers 239-533-7504.

## Useful Links

<http://www.floridayards.org>  
<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>  
<http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>  
<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>



**Perennial Peanut**

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 239-533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. or by emailing [Extgardener@leegov.com](mailto:Extgardener@leegov.com). Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M 11/3/2012.





