



Horticulture



GARDENING TO ATTRACT BUTTERFLIES

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Butterflies are delightful and entertaining creatures to invite into your environment. Understanding and filling their needs will help you attract these magnificent creatures into your garden.

The larvae of butterflies are called caterpillars. Caterpillars are host specific, that is, each species of caterpillar is attracted to a particular type of plant upon which they feed. No need to worry about them munching on your favorite ornamental plant.

Butterflies require plenty of sun, food (nectar) for the adults, food (leaves) for the caterpillars (larval), cover, water and a pesticide free environment. Nectar contains not just sugar but also proteins and other chemicals essential for development. Male butterflies seek out flowers rich in pyrrolizidine alkaloids, which are necessary to produce pheromones necessary for sexual attraction. Plants in the families senecia, eupatorium, borage and helitropium contain pyrrolizidine alkoids in the leaves as well as in the nectar. Cover is provided by woody plants that protect butterflies from harsh weather and provide a place to sleep at night. Water can be provided in puddles of wet sand. Butterflies do not drink from open water sources.

Adult butterflies are guided by their highly developed senses. Their vision detects movement and color but most of their short life is guided by smell and taste. They utilize these senses to locate mates, nectar sources and larval plants on which they lay their eggs.

Designate an area of your yard for a butterfly garden or simply add larval plants in various spots. You may decide to put a few butterfly attracting plants in a container. The location should be sunny and is best placed if also seen from inside your house. This will maximize your pleasure.

NECTAR PLANTS for BUTTERFLIES

PLANT	COMMENT
Asters	All varieties of asters.
Blue Mist Flower (<i>Eupatorium coelestinum</i>)	A favorite of the Queens.
Butterfly Bush (<i>Buddleia spp.</i>)	A must! Flowers from spring to fall. Give plenty of moisture. May not live through the summer in SW Florida.
Firebush (<i>Hamelia patens</i>)	Large shrub with bright red tubular flowers and red tinted leaves. Will grow well in filtered shade. Available in dwarf variety.
Golden Dew Drop (<i>Duranta repens</i>)	Large shrub with tiny blue-purple or white flowers.
Goldenrod (<i>Solidago spp.</i>)	Butterfly favorite, spreads rapidly, golden blooms, late summer to winter.
Jatropha (<i>Jatropha hastata</i>)	Beautiful shrub or small tree with red flowers.
Lantana (<i>Lantana involucrata</i> , <i>L. depressa</i> , <i>L. montivedensis</i>)	Drought tolerant and pungent smell.
Mexican Flame Vine (<i>Senecio confusus</i>)	Beautiful vine with orange and yellow flowers.
Pentas (<i>Penta lanceolats</i>)	Red variety preferred and blooms all year. Dwarf Varieties not recommended.
Porterweeds—Purple, Blue and Pink (<i>Stachytarpheta urticiflora</i>)	One of the favorites of all butterflies and skippers.
Tampa verbena (<i>Glandularia tampensis</i>)	Likes well drained soil. Winter bloomer, lavender flowers, in pots or low creeper.
Trailing Blue Porter Weed (<i>Stachytarpheta jamaicensis</i>)	Low spreading plant. This is the native species.
Tropical sage (<i>Salvia coccinea</i>)	Tall, with scarlet red flowers. Likes well drained soil and sun.
Yellowtop (<i>Flaveria linearis</i>)	Bushy plant with yellow florets.

COMMON BUTTERFLIES and HOST PLANTS FOR SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

BUTTERFLY	LARVAL FOOD PLANT
Sulphurs	Cassia spp. (Bahama cassia,)
Goldrim Swallowtail	Pipevine
Giant Swallowtail	Citrus family, wild lime, Hercules club
Eastern Black Swallowtail	Wild carrot family, parsley, dill, fennel
Zebra Longwing (shade feeders)	*Passion vine (Corky stem and incarnate)
Gulf Fritillary	Passion vine
Monarch	Milkweed
Queen	Milkweed, white vine
White Peacock	Water hyssop, frogfruit, green shrimp plant, and wild petunia
Great Southern White	Saltwort, Virginia peppergrass
Mangrove Buckeye	Black Mangrove
Common Buckeye	Plantain, toadflax, false foxglove, twinflower, green shrimp plant, wild petunia.
Dainty Sulphur	Spanish Needles
Phaon Crescent	Matchhead
Cassius Blue	Plumbago

*Many passion vines do not contain the chemicals caterpillars need and even though they will feed on the plant, they may die because of insufficient nutrients.

REFERENCES

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