

Create-a-Butterfly-Garden

Add beauty and life to your garden with the inclusion of flowers and plants that attract butterflies. There is a range of specific plants that entice butterflies, are easy to care for and are attractive for the garden. It is important to include "Host Plants" to ensure that the butterfly larvae (caterpillars) have a home and "Nectar Plants" for the butterflies to feed upon.

Steps

1. Research first. Find out which butterflies are common in your area. Observation over a few days and the use of a butterfly field guide will help you in this pursuit.
2. Choose "Host Plants" for your garden. Note from your research what the caterpillar (larvae) of the local butterflies eat. Two excellent examples are:
 - *Milkweed* - this attracts the Monarch caterpillar.
 - *Parsley* - this attracts the Black Swallowtail caterpillar.
3. Choose "Nectar Plants" for your garden. Nectar plants serve as the food source for the butterfly. There is a variety of possible plants and some of them are shown here. Excellent choices include:
 - *A Butterfly Bush* - this is suitable for a Swallowtail. Large plant: 4 feet (1.2m) tall, 6 feet (1.8m) wide, make sure it is hardy in your area. Some varieties are considered invasive, so make sure, if you purchase one of these, that you keep it dead-headed to prevent seed production.



- *Swamp Milkweed* - suitable for the Snowberry Clearwing. This plant grows 3 feet (.9m) tall and 18 inches (.5m) wide. It also serves as the host plant for Monarch caterpillars.
 - *Joe Pye Weed* - this is suitable for the Swallowtail. It grows to be a very large plant - 8 feet (2.4m) tall and 4 feet (1.2m) wide. It is a perennial.
 - *Aster* - Asters grow to 3 feet (.9m) tall and 2 feet (.6m) wide. It is a perennial. Butterflies especially love native varieties.
 - *Bee Balm* - this plant grows 2 feet (.6m) tall and 18 inches (.5m) wide. It is a perennial.
 - *Zinnia* - this plant is attractive to a range of butterflies and they especially like the tall varieties. The plant generally grows 4 feet (1.2m) high and 1 foot (.3m) wide. It is an annual and is easy to start from seed.
 - *Pentas* - suitable for Swallowtails. This plant grows 2 feet (.6m) high and 3 feet (.9m) wide. It is an annual in cold climates.
 - *Heliotrope* - this plant attracts a range of butterflies. It grows to a height of 2 feet (.6m) and a width of 1 foot (.3m), although it is possible to contain it in a pot. It will remain a perennial in temperate zones but is only an annual in cold climates.
4. Plan garden on paper. Draw up a plan, or decide where to add these suggestions to a current garden. Keep in mind the full grown size of plants during this planning stage. Also consider their needs for light and water.
5. Purchase plants or seeds from garden center. You can also get these plants and seeds online. Choose robust and healthy plants to give them a good start.



6. Plant your butterfly garden. Make sure to keep new plants and seeds watered until plants are well-established or seeds germinate. Keep the weeds at bay, to give the plants a good chance.
7. Observe and enjoy the butterfly activity in your garden. Watch for female butterflies laying eggs on host plants. Make notes in a record book of the butterflies that you observe and, if you can, take photographs to add to your record book. A digital record book can be a useful and simple way to do this and can be added to over the years. Observed changes in the types and numbers of butterflies coming into your garden can be information shared with biologists, ecologists and climate change specialists who use local variation information to ascertain species increase or decline, as well as temperature fluctuations and change.

Tips

- If there are Monarch butterflies in your area, they are very easy to attract. Swamp Milkweed (noted above) or Tropical Milkweed (annual in colder climates) are excellent host plants for them. The Tropical Milkweed can be started from seed in the winter.
- Monarchs are very fascinating butterflies. Their migration pattern is one of nature's great stories. Indeed, you can participate in the migration by helping to track the Monarchs that arrive in your part of the world. Report your own observations to this map <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/> .
- Butterflies are relatively weak fliers. Don't put your garden in a windy, exposed position. If your whole yard is windy, plant some



shrubs or large, dense perennials on the windward side of your butterfly patch, so that the butterflies can feed in peace on the flowers in their lee.

Watch the Video here <http://www.5min.com/Video/How-to-Create-a-Butterfly-Friendly-Garden-24084738>

Warnings

- Butterflies are insects! You cannot use insecticides in a butterfly garden.
- Always avoid planting potentially invasive species of plants. These plants can spread miles beyond the garden walls and wreak havoc on native ecosystems. If they are planted they will spread.
- Butterfly Bush is considered a noxious weed in states like Washington.

Sources and Citations

- *Glorious Butterfly - Butterfly Gardening and Raising Monarchs.*
<http://www.glorious-butterfly.com/butterfly-garden.html>

