

Attracting Butterflies

Habitat

A butterfly garden can be as small as a windowsill box or as large as your backyard. Wherever you plan to put your butterfly garden, following a few simple steps will help you in making your garden more attractive for butterflies. First, become familiar with the butterflies that are native to your area and the plants they like. Then, find the sunniest spot in the garden, and the butterflies will come.

Flowers

When planning your garden, use flowers that will provide continuous blooming. Simple flowers are easier for the butterflies to access, and they usually produce more nectar. Butterflies are attracted to color; plant in clumps or groups of flowers instead of a one-of-each type of planting.

Sun and Shelter

An ideal butterfly garden should be located in full sun and provide shelter from the wind because butterflies are most active when the weather is sunny and warm. They will benefit greatly if a place is provided for them to warm up after cool mornings. The basking site could be anything from a light-colored rock to a garden statue.

Food

Butterflies receive the energy for flying from nectar-producing plants. Some species also like to feed on rotting fruit or vegetation. Nectar feeders can also be placed in a garden to help attract butterflies. However, providing food for butterflies alone will limit your

garden's function. They can find their favorite plant from miles away and will fly that far just to feed on it. They could also fly that far to find the right kind of plant on which to lay their eggs. Providing plants for the female butterflies for egg laying will increase the uses of your garden. The emerging caterpillars will feed on those plants and then, one day, turn into the butterflies you are trying to attract.

Moisture

Butterflies often are seen having a “puddle party.” Some butterflies are drawn to the moisture and minerals in the mud of a puddle. A depression in a rock or a shallow pool with muddy edges, to collect the rainwater, will provide the water and mineral salts for the butterflies.

Hazards

To help restore the butterfly populations, we need to recreate their habitats because their numbers have been declining due to a combination of factors: chemical sprays, development and bad weather.

Butterflies can overcome the weather, but not the loss of their habitat and not the use of herbicides and pesticides near or on the plants used to attract them. Some caterpillars may feed on your vegetables, but avoid the temptation to spray. Plant a few extra vegetables for the caterpillars and you will be rewarded when the caterpillars become beautiful butterflies.

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