

A Butterfly Garden



Creating a butterfly garden can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience. By selecting several different herbs and blooming plants, you can attract a variety of butterflies during the summer season. Butterflies will bring color and excitement to your garden

Children especially love butterflies. Growing fennel (the official herb for National Herb Week) with other butterfly-attracting plants can be a good learning experience for children. The garden can teach lessons of responsibility for life around us. It can teach some basic skills of plant propagation and can demonstrate the relationship between plants, birds, butterflies and people.

If you provide these things in your garden, butterflies will come:

1 - Food source. The plants, flowers and herbs you offer in your garden. Choose plants that offer nectar supplies as well as foliage for food and protection.

2 - Water. Butterflies require moisture, of course, but they also need the nutrients that come from mud and muddy water. A shallow birdbath with some garden soil around the edges will help, or a boggy plant area where cattails, mint or other moisture-loving plants grow. Simply watering the same spot in the garden every day with the garden hose and making a small puddle will also easily fulfill this requirement.

3 - Shelter. Butterflies are most active during the morning and afternoon, generally avoiding mid-day heat. This is also the most likely time for birds and other predators to hunt butterflies. Shrubs, bushy blooming plants, decorative vines and nearby trees are all helpful. Even a row of sunflowers at the edge of the garden will give the butterflies a place to hide under the leaves for rest and protection.

To plant your butterfly garden:

Choose a location in the sunshine, hopefully an area that receives 8-10 hours of sunlight each day. Most of the herbs and blooming plants that will attract the butterflies to your garden require full sun to thrive.

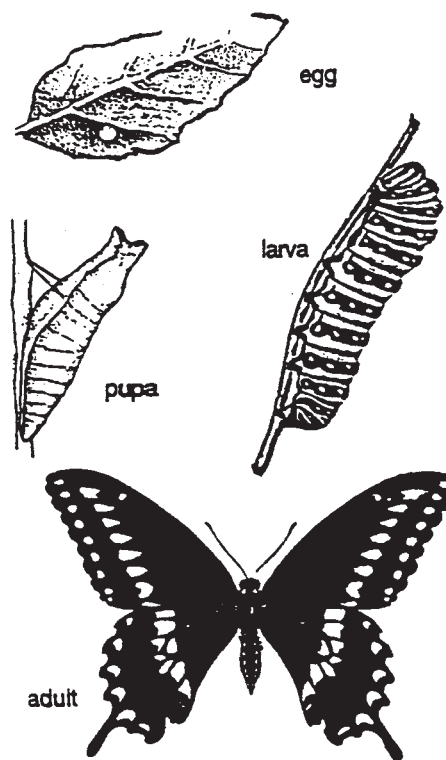
If possible, select an area where trees or shrubs will offer protection from strong winds and that fulfill the above needs for butterflies of food, water and shelter. Plan space to give each larger-growing plant room between it and the next plant to allow for the plants to reach full maturity. Smaller plants can be grown in front of or between some of the other plants.

Till up or dig thoroughly the area to be used for your garden. If this hasn't been a garden or flower bed in the past, add composted material such as composted manure from the garden center, or compost you have made, along with some sphagnum peat moss. Dig this in, mixing it well into the soil and smooth it down with a rake. Now you are ready to plant.

If you are using plants, water them in and mulch the soil with grass clippings, straw or pine needles. If planting seed, mulch the soil lightly, then after the seedlings have grown to 6 or 8 inches, mulch them with a bit more mulch.

An Alternative Butterfly Garden:

Butterflies are at home in meadows, too. You can plant a butterfly garden by tilling a strip of soil in the sunshine and planting wildflower seed in which you have mixed fennel and some of the other plants listed here. This will be a "weedy" kind of garden that you won't tend, but butterflies will still come.





Plants to consider for your butterfly garden:

(Plants are followed by a letter which designates whether they are (A) annual, (P) Perennial or (B) biennial...meaning they come up one year and bloom the following). Plants and seed are available from your local herb nursery or garden center and through lots of mailorder sources.

Fennel, of course, as it is the official herb for National Herb Week. This wonderful plant will attract the beautiful black swallowtail butterfly. You'll first notice these as green, black and white/yellow striped "worms" on the fennel, dill and parsley leaves. Don't destroy them! Those will turn into the lovely, showy butterfly (A & P)

Parsley (B)

Dill (A)

Bee-Balm (*Monarda species*) (P)

Butterfly weed (P) (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

Purple Milkweed (P) (*Asclepias syriaca*)

Marigolds (A)

Zinnias (A)

Snapdragon (A)

Coreopsis (A)

Buterfly bush (*Buddleia*) (P shrub)

Button bush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) (P shrub)

Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium fistulosum*) (P)

Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*) (B)

Lavender (P)

Asters (A & P)

There are lots more plants than can be listed here to attract butterflies. Some, like the shrubs listed may be too large for your first butterfly garden. Choose several plants from this list or research additional butterfly-attracting plants yourself from the library or from the books listed below.

Suggested Books for reading more about butterflies:

Butterflies; How to Identify and Attract Them to Your Garden by Marcus Schneck, Rodale Press, 1990

The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Butterflies, Robert Pyle, Knopf, 1981.

The Butterfly Garden, Mathew Tekulsky, Harvard Common Press, 1985.

Butterfly Gardening: Creating Summer Magic in Your Garden. Created by Xerces Society in association with Smithsonian Institution; Sierra Club Books, 1990.

Butterfly Organizations:

The Xerces Society, 10 Southwest Ash St., Portland, OR 97204

Young Entomologists' Society, Dept. of Entomology, Michigan State Univ., East Lansing, MI 48824

Herb Organizations:

International Herb Association, PO Box 317, Mundelein, IL 60060

Herb Society of America, 9019 Kirtland-Chardon Rd., Mentor, OH 44060

Herb Publications:

The Herb Companion magazine, 201 East Fourth, Loveland, CO 80537

Herb Quarterly, Box 689, San Anselmo, CA 94960

Potpourri from Herbal Acres, Box 428, Washington Crossing, PA 18977

Herb Books:

There are hundreds of excellent, new and exciting books about herbs. Check your local bookstore, library, herb club or garden society for a recommended reading list.



Tucson
Organic
Gardeners

Soiling our hands
since 1971