



Butterfly Gardens in East Texas

ATTRACTING BUTTERFLIES

Attracting butterflies to the home garden fits in perfectly with today's emphasis on a more natural landscape.

Butterflies, like birds and other small animals, are drawn to areas that provide water, food and shelter. The following tips will help you create your own backyard sanctuary:

- Locate in a sunny area. Butterflies like direct sunlight and heat.
- Provide shelter by planting along a fence, hedge or building if wind is a problem.
- Avoid using chemical pesticides.
- Provide a warm resting spot by placing a board or a few flat stones around the garden.
- Fill a shallow saucer with water and sink it into the soil.
- Provide food plants for the caterpillar. Include milkweed, thistle, clover, goldenrod and other natives in a spot where their invasive habits will not be a problem. Other menu favorites are carrots, dill, parsley and nasturtium. Choices for the annual border include marigolds, red salvia, zinnias, lantana, cosmos and impatiens.
- Perennial favorites include purple coneflower, salvias, butterfly weed, Mexican sunflower, yarrow and buddleia (butterfly bush).



Monarch

Geneva Thomas, Smith County Master Gardener
Texas Cooperative Extension

BUTTERFLIES ADD BEAUTY

Enjoy butterflies in your garden? Now is the time to plan to make your garden irresistible to butterflies. A sunny location with bright flowers of purple, yellow, orange and red especially those with clusters of short, tubular blossoms provide a tailor-made attraction.

Marigolds, nasturtiums, zinnias, hollyhocks, and daylilies are among butterflies' favorites. The Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*) is a graceful shrub with showy clumps of vibrant purple. And Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), with its brilliant orange flowers, is excellent for attracting butterflies.

Plan for continuous bloom through the growing season and you will be rewarded with butterflies from early spring till late fall. One word of caution, however: don't use pesticides in or near your butterfly garden. Most traditional pesticides are toxic to butterflies.

For more information on gardening to attract butterflies, check out some of the excellent books on the subject, as well as specialized sites on the Internet.

BUTTERFLY-ATTRACTING PLANTS

From a butterfly's perspective, all nectar-bearing plants were not created equal. Most appear to be the butterfly's equivalent of a fast, salty snack or a light sandwich lunch. The flowers of only a very few plants tempt butterflies to indulge in five-course gourmet meals-to be lingered over for hours rather than for seconds or minutes. Most butterfly gardeners agree that the two plants listed below belong at or near the top of the short five-course-meal list. Those wishing to bring many more butterflies into their gardens quickly should definitely consider planting these.

BUDDLEIA: This fast-growing, long-blooming Chinese shrub (*Buddleia davidii*) has been universally known as Butterfly Bush since first being cultivated in the 1890s. Its tapering, four-to-six inch panicles of small, deep-throated flowers usually come in shades of purple, lavender, or pink. They are particular favorites of large and showy butterflies such as Monarchs and Swallowtails. Aside from annual pruning and light fertilization, the plants are virtually maintenance free and will grow in almost any soil, flowering in either full sun or partial shade. The standard versions reach heights of about six feet, but more compact three-to-four foot varieties are also available.

LANTANA: This garden-center favorite is a long-blooming, low-growing (2-4 feet) perennial with flowers shaped like miniature verbenas. It comes in three species and many hybrids, all of which are prime attractors for butterflies of all sizes: (1) *Lantana camara* (common lantana)-A native of the West Indies, this is the source species for most of the commercial cultivars which come in a great many colors and named varieties. (The most familiar of these is probably the



Mallow

handsome pink and yellow "Ham and Eggs" version, which has become naturalized in part of the Lower South. (2) *Lantana horrida* (Texas lantana)-This south Texas species differs from *L. camara* in having orange-dominated flowers and smaller and rougher-textured leaves. (3) *Lantana montevidensis* (Trailing lantana)- Ground cover type with trailing branches up to 3 to 6 feet. Purple and white most common forms. Lantanas will flower in full sun or light shade. As semi-desert natives, they bloom best when not overfertilized or over

watered. The roots of some tender varieties can be killed by hard freezes in our area. Farther north, lantanas are usually treated as annuals.

Lee McAlester, Smith County Master Gardener
Texas Cooperative Extension

BUTTERFLY GARDEN

Butterflies are insects that gardeners try to attract to their gardens. While they are fluttering through the plants gathering nectar, the butterflies are also pollinating your garden.

Butterflies are cold blooded, so plant the garden in a warm, sunny area. Provide flat rocks for them to rest on, a shallow pan or pie plate filled with sand pebbles or soil, and a bit of water. Butterflies will get their feet a bit wet when drinking but won't get their entire bodies wet.

Butterflies' wings are extremely fragile, so plant near a wall or fence that will shelter your garden from wind. Also, you could plant a hedge of butterfly bushes or viburnum, which will also provide nighttime shelter for the butterflies.

To entice butterflies to your garden, plant for the caterpillars as well as the butterflies. Butterflies go through several life stages that require a specific place in your garden.



A butterfly bush (*Buddleia*) is a great start for a garden spot.

Phlox, coneflower, zinnias, sedum, lantana, and salvia are a few of the many annuals and perennials that you can add. Dill, parsley, and Queen Anne's lace will provide food for the caterpillars.

Avoid any use of pesticides in the butterfly garden, as they are deadly to the caterpillars and butterflies. They may keep away unwanted insects, but keep butterflies away as well.

A bit of research for finding appropriate plants and a bit of work to prepare the bed will be rewarded with a colorful display of these helpful insects.

Sue Clark, Smith County Master Gardener
Texas Cooperative Extension

ATTRACTING BUTTERFLIES TO THE GARDEN

There is no denying that gardeners have a deep love of nature. Not only do they love flowers but also the animals that the flowers attract. Among those creatures of nature is a wide range of colorful butterflies. If you desire to attract them, remember one word-*nectar*. Gardening for butterflies is easy and rewarding. The following are a few of the plants that can be used:

- Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidi*)-This plant is a deciduous perennial that grows up to 6' tall if untrimmed. Plant it in sun with rich soil that has good drainage. This plant blooms on new growth from summer to fall. It may die back in winter. Always trim it back to ten inches in height before spring growth.
- Coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*)-This plant bears single- or double-petaled yellow flowers on wiry stems. Plant in sun to partial shade. Deadhead for continuous flowering. Blooms May to July.

- Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)-This plant grows 2' to 4' with colors from purple to white. Plant in full sun to light shade in well-drained soil. It is tolerant of heat and drought.
- Sweet Alyssum (*Lobularia maritime*)-This annual grows 4" to 12" and produces white, lilac, pink, and purple flowers. Plant in full sun to partial shade with well-drained soil. This plant may stop flowering during hot weather. It makes a good choice for an edging, rock garden, or window box. It blooms from late spring to frost.

A gardener knows that nectar can come from a variety of flowers that he or she can grow in a garden to attract butterflies.

Patricia Turinsky, Smith County Master Gardener
Texas Cooperative Extension

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<http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu/tips/land/butterfly.html>