

Butterfly Gardens

Butterflies are delightful living jewels that beautify any garden. With a little planning, you can create a garden that welcomes butterflies in all their life stages for enjoyment throughout the summer.

Planting flowers that supply adult butterflies with nectar will attract some butterflies to your garden, but to attract and keep many different species to enjoy you'll have to include host plants also. What are host plants? They are the plants that female butterflies lay their eggs on the hatch into caterpillars. Each species of butterfly has specific plant or plants that nourish the growing caterpillar and they cannot survive on any other plant. Your host plants will be eaten by the caterpillars, so remember not to worry about holes on the leaves - and no pesticides unless absolutely unavoidable (see below).



NEW GARDEN
LANDSCAPING & NURSERY

newgarden.com
email:info@newgarden.com

New Garden Gazebo
3811 Lawndale Dr.
Greensboro, NC 27455
phone: 336-288-8893

Host Plants

There are many host plants already in or near your landscape if you live near natural areas like woods or meadows. Several commonly planted ornamental plants are also host plants and may already be in your garden.

○=Full sun ○●=Full to part sun ●=Shade

Annual & Perennial host plants			
		Lupine (Lupinus spp.)	○●
Name (Scientific Name)	sun	Parsley (Petroselinum spp.)	○●
African Marigold (Tagetes erecta)	○	Passionflower	○●
Alfalfa, Clover	○●	Queen Anne's Lace (Daucus carota)	○●
Aster spp.	○●	Rock Cress (Arabis spp.)	○●
Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia fulgida)	○●	Sedum spectabile	○●
Cabbage	○	Showy Milkweed (Asclepias speciosa)	○●
Citrus	○	Snapdragon (Antirrhinum spp.)	○●
Common Milkweed (Asclepias syriaca)	○●	Sunflower (Helianthus spp.)	○
Dill (Anethum graveolens)	○	Swamp Milkweed (Asclepias incarnata)	○●
French Marigold (Tagetes patula)	○	Sweet William (Dianthus barbatus)	○●
Hollyhock (Alcea spp.)	○	Violets (Volia spp.)	○●

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Tree & Shrub host plants			
Name (Scientific Name)	sun		
		Oak (<i>Quercus</i> spp.)	○
Birch (<i>Betula</i> spp.)	○●	PawPaw (<i>Asimina triloba</i>)	○●
Black willow (<i>Salix nigra</i>)	○●	Poplar (<i>Populus</i> spp.)	○●
Boxelder (<i>Acer negundo</i>)	○●	Spicebush (<i>Lindea benzoin</i>)	○●
Elm (<i>Ulmus</i> spp.)	○	Sycamore (<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>)	○
Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus</i> spp.)	○	Wild Cherry (<i>Prunus serotina</i>)	○●

There are only two caterpillars that consume so much that they can become a pest themselves: the white cabbageworm that feeds on many plants in the cabbage family and the black swallowtail that feeds on parsley, dill, and others in the carrot family.

Nectar Plants

Adult butterflies drink nectar from flowers, and having a selection of nectar plants that bloom in succession throughout the season will bring butterflies to your garden. Annuals tend to have longer bloom times than perennials. Look for “old fashioned” varieties and single flowers instead of double flowered forms. Look in the seed section for plants suitable for butterflies. Butterflies prefer mass plantings of a variety to single plants, and also favor purple, lavender & pink flowers (but other colors will attract butterflies also). You’ll see that some plants are both host plants and nectar plants, so plant plenty of those!

Annual & Perennial nectar plants			
Name (Scientific Name)	sun		
		Gloriosa Daisy (<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>)	○
		Goldenrod (<i>Solidago</i> spp.)	○
Achillea (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)	○●	Heliotrope (<i>Heliotropium arborescens</i>)	○●
African Marigold (<i>Tagetes erecta</i>)	○	Joe Pye Weed (<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i>)	○●
Aster (<i>Aster</i> spp.)	○●	Lupine (<i>Lupinus</i> spp.)	○●
Bee Balm (<i>Monarda</i> spp.)	○●	Mallow (<i>Alcea</i> spp.)	○●
Black-eyed Susan (<i>Rudbeckia fulgida</i>)	○●	Mexican Sunflower (<i>Tithonia rotundifolia</i>)	○
Blanketflower (<i>Gaillardia x grandiflora</i>)	○	Milkweed (<i>Asclepias</i> spp.)	○●
Daylily (<i>Hemerocallis</i> spp.)	○●	Mints (<i>Mentha</i> spp.)	○●
French Marigold (<i>Tagetes patula</i>)	○	Mountain Bluet (<i>Centaurea montana</i>)	○
Gayfeather/Blazing Star (<i>Litardis</i> spp.)	○●	Nasturtium (<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>)	○●
Globe Thistle (<i>Echinops ritro</i>)	○	Oxeye Daisy (<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i>)	○

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“Where your imagination takes root”

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Tree & Shrub nectar plants			
Name (Scientific Name)	sun		
		Pussy Willow (<i>Salix discolor</i>)	<input type="radio"/>
Black Willow (<i>Salix nigra</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	Sweet Pepperbush (<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Coralberry (<i>Symphoricarpos orbiculatus</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	Butterfly Bush (<i>Buddleia</i> spp.)	<input type="radio"/>
Korean Lilac (<i>Syringa meyeri</i> , <i>S. Patula</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	Bluebeard (<i>Caryopteris clandonensis</i>)	<input type="radio"/>
Mock Orange (<i>Philadelphus coronarius</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	Tropical Hibiscus (<i>Hibiscus roseo-sinensis</i>)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Plum, Cherry (<i>Prunus</i> spp.)	<input type="radio"/>	Azalea (<i>Rhododendron</i> spp.)	<input type="radio"/>

Other ways to attract butterflies

- ◇ Protect your butterfly garden from strong wind by creating it near a wall, fence or other windbreak.
- ◇ Provide a patch or pot of damp sand. Butterflies cannot drink from open water like bird-baths but can drink from very shallow puddles or damp areas.
- ◇ Provide basking stones. Butterflies are cold-blooded and need the sun’s rays to warm up enough to fly on cool mornings.
- ◇ Leave some areas of your property “natural” if possible to provide wild host and nectar plants a place to grow.
- ◇ Make a butterfly feeder (a fun kid’s project): Drill a small hole in the lid of a small jar. Plug the hole with cotton. Fill the jar with a solution of one part table sugar (not honey) to nine parts water. Decorate the lid with colorful “petals” and hang in a tree near your butterfly garden.

Controlling Insect Pests in your Butterfly Garden

Wherever possible, avoid using pesticides in your butterfly garden. If other insects become a problem you must deal with, treat only the areas affected with insecticidal soaps or oils. These will harm caterpillars if they are sprayed directly, so be precise. Often, there are insects such as spiders, lacewings, ladybird beetles, and ground beetles that actually help to control unwanted pests, especially if you avoid using pesticides.

Butterfly Houses

Occasionally, a butterfly may take refuge in your butterfly house, but most will prefer to hide in natural areas, under loose tree bark, in tall unmowed grass and undisturbed brush piles. Enjoy your butterfly house as a garden ornament, but don’t be disappointed if butterflies don’t take up residence.

