

Nectar Plants Growing in the IDEA Garden

Azalea (*Rhododendron*)
Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)
Buttercup Flower (*Turnera spp.*)
Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*)
Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
Tropical Butterfly Weed (*A. curassavica*)
Cat's Whiskers (*Orthosiphon aristatus*)
Catmint (*Nepeta spp.*)
Chase Tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*)
Chives (*Allium*)
Cigar Plant (*Cuphea spp.*)
Cleome (*Cleome hasslerana*)
Firebush (*Hamelia patens*)
Garlic (*Allium*)
Hibiscus (*Hibiscus spp.*)
Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*)
Honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp.*)
Impatiens (*Impatiens spp.*)
Lantana (*Lantana spp.*)
Melampodium (*Melampodium paludosum*)
Mexican Sunflower (*Tithonia*)
Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*)
Periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus*)
Phlox (*Phlox spp.*)
Redbud (*Cercis spp.*)
Rudbeckia (*Rudbeckia spp.*)
Sage (*Salvia spp.*)
Verbena (*Verbena spp.*)
Zinnia (*Zinnia spp.*)

Larval Host Plants Growing in the IDEA Garden

Aster (*Aster spp.*)
Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
Tropical Butterfly Weed (*A. curassavica*)
Cape Plumbago (*Plumbago auriculata*)
Dill (*Anethum graveolens*)
Dutchman's Pipe (*Aristolochia macrophylla*)
Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)
Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)
Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*)
Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*)
Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum majus*)

Butterfly Garden



The IDEA Garden is a designated
Monarch Way Station



Having a butterfly garden can be a delightful and rewarding experience. Butterflies are beautiful and complicated creatures, often referred to as the gems of the insect world. Butterflies and moths are easily differentiated from all other insects by their colorful flattened scales covering their wings and body, at times long and silky and appearing hair like.

The life cycle of the butterfly includes four stages, called the complete metamorphosis. These stages include: the embryo or egg stage; caterpillar, larva or wormlike stage; chrysalis or pupa (the mummy transition) stage; the adult (winged) reproductive stage.

Interesting facts about butterflies

The antennae almost always end in a club or swelling at the tip and are used for touching, hearing, tasting, balancing and smelling.

The shape, structure and position of the eyes enable it to see in all directions except directly beneath its body. The butterfly has the broadest spectrum of color vision known to exist in the animal kingdom.

The six feet possess organs which enable it to taste its food; this tasting triggers an automatic reflex action which causes the tongue-like proboscis to uncoil.

The four wings of the butterfly are completely covered with thousands of tiny flat scales in various shapes and colors, providing insulation from cold, protection from rain or dew and aid in flying.

The scales are extremely fragile. If touched they readily adhere to fingers, appearing as dust.

Planning Your Garden

A successful butterfly garden doesn't necessarily mean lots of work, but a few necessities must be provided. Like most creatures, butterflies need sun, shelter, food, warmth and a place for a family. Sun provides the butterfly a way to regulate their body temperature, enabling them to fly. Stones in the garden absorb the sun's heat and provide a basking spot. Butterflies like to have damp "puddling" spots in sunny areas where they can sip water and dissolved salts from the mud. Shady areas are needed also because temperatures can become too hot for the butterflies. It's also important to have shelter from the wind.

Plants serve two important functions for butterflies: nectar-producing plants provide food for the adult butterflies, which are also attracted to overripe fruit such as banana or melon. Secondly host plants for butterflies to lay their eggs and caterpillars or larvae to feed.

To simplify, you can have just 3 to 6 nectaring plants that bloom at different times, providing a steady supply of nectar for the butterflies. Shrubs like Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia*) and Chaste Tree (*Vitex*) are great for this; they also provide shelter for the butterflies to roost for the night. When selecting flowers for butterflies, try to get the old fashioned types, especially single-flowered types since double flowers tend to have less nectar. Many plants are nectar as well as larval food plants.

The caterpillar will eat only specific plants. To choose useful host plants find out which butterfly species are local in your area. Nettles and hops are favored by many caterpillars and trees like elms, hackberry, sassafras, and willows offer food for many caterpillars. Letting local weeds or native plants grow at the fringe of the garden is a good way to draw butterflies, since they are natural food and host plants for the butterflies in your region. The eggs are laid by the adult on or near the food plant which the larvae will feed upon when they hatch. Shapes and colors of eggs are usually characteristic for the species of butterfly and are wonderfully and beautifully varied. To attract the caterpillar to get the adults, you need to tolerate loss of foliage to the plants; however the rewards are well worth it to draw a wide range of butterflies to your yard.

Do not use pesticides in your garden or all your efforts will be wasted.

A few of the many different kinds of plants that should help attract butterflies to your yard are listed on the following page. This is only a partial list. Good resources for more information are the internet, bookstores and the library.



Smith County Master Gardener Association
<http://scmg.tamu.edu>

East Texas Gardening
<http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu>



The Texas Master Gardener activities are coordinated by [AgriLife Extension](#). Texas Master Gardener programs serve all people regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.