

Butterfly Gardening



Would you like to garden, but are simply too hurried, stressed out, and overworked to start another project? Take heart; butterfly gardening is easy. With minimal effort, you can create an environment that will entice butterflies to linger. Follow a few simple steps, and you'll be able to sit back, relax, and watch them flutter by.

Pick a quiet, protected, sunny location for your butterfly garden.

Too much traffic or wind will disturb these gentle visitors.

Butterflies need plenty of sunshine to warm their wing muscles up for flying. Also, place some stones or boulders in your planting area, where butterflies can perch and absorb heat. Situate evergreen shrubs nearby to provide them with protection from intense heat, cold, and wind. Butterflies are most visible in the low deserts during the late spring and early fall.

Design Tips for Butterfly Gardens



Use masses of purple, white or yellow flowers to catch the butterflies' attention. They are slightly less attracted to orange, red and blue-flowering plants.

Plant diversity and variety are important.

Some plants provide nectar for the butterflies to feed on, while others are important sources of food for the caterpillars. Your garden must provide both. Select plants with varying heights and overlapping bloom periods to provide easy and year 'round nectar accessibility.

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Provide a water source for the butterflies.

Janis Merritt with the San Antonio Botanical Gardens has the following simple suggestion: " Fill a shallow dish with sand to approximately one inch from the top, add pebbles for the butterflies to land on, then add water." She also cautions against overhead irrigation, which can dilute or wash away nectar.

Avoid using any pesticides in your garden!

Unfortunately, you can't have butterflies without the caterpillars. However, butterfly larvae usually occur singly or in small numbers, so the feeding damage should be minimal.



Caesalpinia pulcherrima
(Red Bird of Paradise)

Nectar and Larval Plants

For those of us who like to keep things simple, these plants provide both nectar for adult butterflies, and food for the caterpillars.

- Asclepias linaria...Pine-leaf milkweed
- Asclepias subulata...Desert milkweed
- Asclepias tuberosa...Butterfly weed
- Calliandra californica...Baja red fairy duster
- Cercis canadensis var. mexicana...Mexican redbud
- Dalea frutescens Sierra Negra™
- Dalea greggii...Trailing indigo bush
- Dyssodia pentachaeta...Golden dyssodia
- Eysenhardtia orthocarpa...Kidneywood
- Justicia californica...Chuparosa
- Lantana species
- Prosopis glandulosa...Texas honey mesquite
- Sphaeralcea ambigua...Globe mallow
- Ungnadia speciosa...Mexican buckeye
- Zexmenia hispida Devil's River™





Calliandra californica
(Baja Red Fairy Duster)

Larval Plants

Combine these plants with some of the nectar plants to supply food for the entire life cycle.

Acacia smallii...Sweet acacia
 Andropogon gerardii...Big bluestem
 Bouteloua curtipendula...Sideoats grama
 Celtis pallida...Desert hackberry
 Celtis reticulata...Canyon hackberry, Netleaf hackberry
 Leucophyllum frutescens...Cenizo, Texas sage
 Muhlenbergia species
 Nolina texana...Sacahuista, Bear grass
 Penstemon species
 Platanus species
 Quercus fusiformis...Escarpment live oak
 Quercus muhlenbergii...Chinquapin oak
 Schizachrium scoparium...Little bluestem
 Sorghastrum nutans...Indiangrass

Nectar Plants

Combine these plants with some of the larval plants to supply food for the entire life cycle.

Acacia greggii...Cat claw acacia
 Acacia rigidula...Blackbrush acacia
 Aquilegia chrysantha...Golden columbine
 Baccharis sarothroides...Desert broom
 Baileya multiradiata...Desert marigold
 Bebbia juncea...Sweet bush
 Berlandiera lyrata...Chocolate flower
 Buddleja davidii...Butterfly bush
 Buddleja marrubiifolia...Wooly butterfly bush
 Caesalpinia pulcherrima...Red bird of paradise
 Calliandra eriophylla...Pink fairy duster
 Caryopteris x clandonensis 'Dark Knight' ...Blue mist
 Cassia wislizenii...Shrubby senna
 Chilopsis linearis...Desert willow
 Chrysactinia mexicana...Damianita
 Chrysothamnus nauseosus...Rabbitbrush, Chamisa
 Cordia parvifolia...Littleleaf cordia
 Dalea pulchra...Indigo bush
 Echinacea purpurea...Purple coneflower
 Encelia farinosa...Brittle bush
 Ericameria laricifolia...Turpentine bush
 Erigeron divergens...Native fleabane
 Eriogonum fasciculatum var. poliofolium...Flat-top buckwheat
 Eupatorium greggii Boothill™

Fallugia paradoxa...Apache plume
Fouquieria splendens...Ocotillo
Gaura lindheimeri
Gutierrezia sarothrae...Snakeweed
Helianthus maximilliani...Maximillian sunflower
Hymenoxys acaulis...Angelita daisy
Hyptis emoryi...Desert lavender
Leucaena retusa...Golden leadball
Leucophyllum species...Texas sage
Liatris species...Gayfeather
Linum lewisii...Blue flax
Melampodium leucanthum...Blackfoot daisy
Oenothera caespitosa...White evening primrose
Oenothera missouriensis
Pithecellobium pallens...Tenaza
Plumbago scandens Summer Snow™
Rhus glabra...Scarlet sumac
Rhus microphylla...Littleleaf sumac
Rosmarinus officinalis...Rosemary
Ruellia species
Salvia clevelandii...Chaparral sage
Salvia dorii var. dorii...Desert sage
Salvia farinacea Texas Violet™...Mealy cup sage
Salvia greggii...Autumn sage
Salvia leucantha...Mexican bush sage
Sambucus mexicana...Mexican elderberry
Stachys coccinea...Texas betony
Tagetes lemmonii...Mount Lemmon marigold
Tagetes lucida...Licorice marigold
Verbena gooddingii...Native verbena
Viguiera stenoloba...Skeletonleaf goldeneye
Vitex agnus-castus...Monk's pepper tree
Zinnia acerosa...Desert zinnia
Zinnia grandiflora...Prairie zinnia



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