

Living Art: Bringing Butterflies into your Garden
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Have you ever considered that the plants you choose have a huge effect on the type of insects in your garden ecosystem? You can easily control what type of wildlife will visit your yard, including pollinating insects. In fact, the strength of your garden grows as you attract certain species. Hummingbirds and butterflies, as well as bees and other beneficial insects, focus their attention on preferred types of flowering plants. Many of these are native species, calling on the native creatures around your home, and you have a lot of choice when selecting which plants to use. Butterfly and hummingbird gardens are known for their colorful beauty, bustling winged activity, and overall enjoyment for the whole family.



Monarch

In general, hummingbirds:
Are attracted to bright color
Need their energy boosted constantly, so like nectar
Have a poor sense of smell, so don't need scent
Have thin, long beaks so like pendulous flowers
Hover as they suck nectar, so don't need landing pads.

Adult butterflies prefer:
Purplish-pink flowers
Nectar in tubes
Flowers massed together
Protruding stamens and stigmas
Sweet, mild scents



Black
Swallowtail

Butterflies have long tongues that are used to lap up nectar within elongated flowers, and carry pollen on their furry bodies. They are not extremely particular about plant species in general, and will branch out to discover new interests. To be sure you attract them, plant a few plants of the same species together so butterflies have a breadth of similar color and fragrance. Be sure never to use pesticides in the garden, this will upset their delicate environment and lifestyle.

To keep these little faeries in your garden throughout their life cycle, you'll need to include a few extra plants in addition to their nectar sources. In time, adult butterflies will need a place to deposit their eggs, and there are a few plant species they will be looking for that will serve as food plants for their larvae and caterpillars. Later on when changing again from caterpillar to chrysalis, they'll look for a nice twiggy stem to attach to. See the Butterfly Garden Plant List for a wide variety of choices of both nectar and larval food sources. Choosing plants native to your area or those closely related has many benefits: you will use much less water, less herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers, have easier

maintenance and attract local wildlife. Native plants help your garden ecosystem flourish



Monarch Caterpillar

In addition to perusing your garden for sweets and the appropriate home for new eggs, butterflies like “puddling”, or gathering in muddy holes to drink and feed on salt residues. You can encourage this playful habit by putting out a saucer with wet sand for them to puddle in. They also like overripe fruit, so if you have any that you weren’t able to finish, put it outside in chunks in a saucer for them.

Did you know that:

- Native insects are 90% beneficial. They do not destroy native crops, rather they use only what can sustain themselves, leaving your plants alive.
- Pollinating insects are responsible for helping create 1/3 of our food.
- Native insects act as natural weed control for your garden.
- Butterflies perform innate population control by adjusting their rate of reproduction in response to available resources.

Having a butterfly garden is a multi-faceted learning experience for us. Besides gaining new knowledge of plant species, local insects, and having friendly conversation with nursery folk, this project also helps us let go of our need to have plants’ leaves in pristine condition. These beneficial insects need to munch on vegetation – that’s why you’re providing it! Luckily, you’ll find that butterfly populations do not desecrate their cherished habitat by eating a plant to death, and they will also regulate their societal spread to allow for the available needed plants. We can learn a lot from them!

For more information check out:

- [The Butterfly Garden](#) by Mathew Tekulsky
- [Taylor’s Guide to Natural Gardening](#)
- [The Sunset Western Garden Book](#)



Chrysalis



Dainty Sulphur

FYI: Kitties like gardens too!

Here are some plants that benefit them:

- Catnip and cat thyme (teucrium marum), catgrass (oats) and ribbon grass (phalaris) for leisurely munching
- Elephant garlic as a cleansing addition to diet
- Aloe vera for healing simple wounds
- Rosemary adds sheen to fur coats
- Lavender, pennyroyal, chamomile and thyme serve as natural flea-deterrents