



Forest Facts

CREATING A BUTTERFLY GARDEN

January 2015

Plan for a butterfly garden before spring arrives

It may seem hard to believe, but it's true: pollination is essential to the successful reproduction of more than 90 percent of the 250,000 flowering plant species now in existence. More than 100,000 varieties of insects including bees, butterflies, moths and beetles serve as pollinators. Pollinators also include at least 1,035 species of vertebrates that include birds and bats.

Unfortunately, research continues to verify the decline of the many pollinator species so important to the food sources and ecosystems on which we depend. Everyone loves butterflies because they're beautiful; however, they're also great pollinators. Want to help reverse the decline of butterflies in our communities and urban areas? There are simple things we can do in our local landscapes and gardens to help provide them with food and habitat; these actions will also benefit bees, moths and hummingbirds. Taking time out for a little garden planning is a first step.

Prepare the site

Selecting a sunny location, you'll first want to remove as much lawn area as possible (suggestion: try pushing your comfort level). Also, before planting, experiment with the garden's shape by outlining the boundaries with your garden hose. Try different shapes, and amend the soil if needed. You'll want to strategically place shorter plants in front of taller ones, providing easy access and shelter for butterflies that frequent your yard.

Create a resting spot and water source

A log or large rock in a sunny location will provide a good place for butterflies to perch and rest. Butterflies also require moist soil or a shallow puddle. A slow-dripping

faucet or water feature near a water-loving plant works well. You can also dig out 2 or 3 inches of soil about 24 inches wide in a frequently watered area to provide water.

Plant choices: food for caterpillars and butterflies

You'll want to start by figuring out which plants provide nectar for adult butterflies, and which will feed caterpillars; choose several from each category and then evaluate your landscape or garden for best placement. In this way, your yard will provide for the entire butterfly life cycle.



Monarch butterfly

Photo by Cynthia Orlando, ODF

Goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*)

Goldenrod grows from 1 1/2 to 5 feet tall and features numerous lance-shaped leaves that contrast nicely with its yellow flowers. Give it full sun to partial shade, and trim it back each year.

Some species spread faster than others, which may or may not be to your liking. Inquire about species specifics at your local native plant nursery.

Showy Milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*)

The larval food plant for Monarch butterflies, milkweed is most easily propagated by seed sown outdoors after frost. Pretty, brightly-colored orange or yellow flower clusters are an attractive feature of this 1-3 foot-tall perennial plant, which favors dry sand or gravel soil.

Pearly Everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*)

This attractive native has gray, silvery leaves and stems. They bloom most of the summer with clusters of yellow and white flowers; in the fall, you can hang the cut flowers upside down to dry and use in floral arrangements. Pearly Everlasting is used by American Lady Butterfly caterpillars as a host plant, and is drought-tolerant. They also provide nectar for a variety of butterflies.

Douglas wallflower (*Erysimum capitatum*)

This pretty plant, a biennial member of the mustard family, is a host plant for Sara Orange Tip butterflies. Flowers are bright yellow to deep orange or red. Douglas wallflower prefers full sun to light shade, is low-maintenance and is drought-tolerant.



Anise Swallowtail

Photo by Peter Bryant

Lupine (*Lupinus*)

This popular perennial native is a legume and features flowers in whorls on a pike that are usually blue or purple; it's a host plant for Gray Hairstreak butterflies. Lupine is fairly easy to grow from seed sown in the early spring in

full sun. (Fender's blue butterfly, an endangered species, is host-specific on Kincaid's lupine).

Checkermallow (*Sidalcea*)

These plants are a cheery sight, lasting from late spring through early summer. They feature tall stems of delicate hollyhock-like flowers, white to rosy-pink, and are actively visited by both bees and butterflies - including the Gray Hairstreak butterfly.

Trees

Willows (*Salix scouleriana*) are host to Western Tiger Swallowtail caterpillars, as well as mourning cloak and Lorquin's admiral butterflies. Be sure the willow(s) you buy are an upland variety (sourced from uplands - you can ask at the nursery).

While we're on the subject of trees helpful to butterflies, you might also consider Black cottonwood or a locally-sourced quaking aspen, both are often frequented by Lorquin's admiral, Western tiger swallowtail, and the mourning cloak butterfly.

Shrubs

Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) is a deciduous shrub with small, white, greenish-pink to white flowers. Plant them to assist the Chaldeon (variable) checkerspot butterfly, as well as for their appeal to a variety of birds and wildlife.

Pacific Serviceberry, Ocean Spray and Ceanothus are other excellent choices.

Have your garden certified by the North American Butterfly Association

The North American Butterfly Association offers a certification program to encourage landscaping with butterfly-friendly plants. Three or more plants that supply food for caterpillars, nectar-supplying plants for butterflies, a water source and a location providing at least half a day's sunshine are the basic requirements. Once certified, you're eligible to purchase a weatherproof Garden Certification sign for your yard or garden.

For more information:

http://www.nababutterfly.com/cert_index.html