

Creating a Butterfly Garden

Let's take a look at how to create a butterfly garden—just the basics. You need to have three goals in planning a butterfly garden: drawing in butterflies, keeping in butterflies, and encouraging them to breed.

First, you need several plants to produce nectar to feed the butterflies; preferably, these should provide blooms throughout the summer season, especially the mid-to-late summer. It is during this time that butterflies are the most active. Flowers that produce much nectar in multiple blooms per plant are the best choices.

Annuals, which bloom throughout the season, are probably the best option for your butterfly garden. They supply the butterflies with nectar constantly so that they keep returning to your yard all season long.

There are also some perennials which are great for drawing in butterflies. Favorite perennials for butterfly gardens include lilac and asters. The coneflower is a beautiful wildflower, and butterflies adore it. Some herbs also provide good nectar, such as parsley, mint, and dill.

Homemade butterfly feeders are easy to make; all you need is a small jar, like a baby food jar. Drill a hole in the jar's lid and fill that hole with cotton; then, you just fill the jar with a sugar-water mix—which should be nine parts water, one part sugar. Decorating the jar with various bits of felt will draw in the butterflies; just hang it up in your garden so that the butterflies may come to eat the sugar-water "nectar" through the cotton in the lid.

Providing plants to feed the butterflies as well as their larvae isn't enough. You must be sure that your garden is hospitable to them in other ways as well. Wind can cause a lot of damage to butterflies and their eggs, so you'll have to supply some kind of windbreak in your garden to provide shelter and encourage the butterflies to lay their eggs there. Since butterflies like to group at the edges of mud puddles, you should keep a damp area in your garden so that they have a place to congregate.

Try not to use a lot of pesticides in your garden, as poisons like that may kill butterfly larvae, as well as causing harm to the adults. Even just a little insecticide can kill these delicate critters. Gentle caterpillars can be killed before they've even had the opportunity to age into butterflies.

They tend to kill adults when they eat nectar that has mixed with poison, or when they land on treated plants to rest. Be very sure that you have damaged pests before spraying insecticides on your plants. You may be confusing the chomping caterpillars, which do no real damage to your plants, with genuine pests.

Most flowers that have bright colors and smell sweet should draw butterflies into your garden. A wide range of flowers is best, particularly annuals, if you want to attract the most kinds of butterflies. Because different species of butterfly are drawn to different kinds of flower, having a variety will prove to bring in the most various collection of butterflies to your garden.

About the Author

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