

How To



Create a Butterfly Garden

1. **Choose your site.** Butterflies rely on sunshine for warmth as well as for navigation. Look for a relatively sunny spot with some shelter – it's an ideal spot for a butterfly garden.
2. **Learn your local butterflies.** Field guides and a little focused observation will help you identify butterfly species native to your area. You'll soon find where butterflies are most common in your neighborhood, and the sorts of habitats they prefer.
3. **Design a butterfly habitat.** Butterfly gardens are often informal and naturalistic. One easy design features a perimeter of woody plants layered with shorter shrubs and flowering perennials, allowing a sunny, open space in the center. This design provides shelter and roosting space while maximizing sun and nectar availability.
4. **Feed your butterflies.** Most adult butterflies rely on flower nectar for nutrition, but they do not necessarily visit just any bloom. The ideal "butterfly flower" is a colorful, fragrant, tubular blossom. Timing is important, as well; spring- and fall-blooming plants can mean life or death to unexpected butterfly visitors, as well as add interest to the garden.
5. **Provide shelter for your butterflies.** Butterflies are hardy creatures, but still require protection from the elements and predators. An informal hedge or a fence covered with flowering vines may create a windbreak or a shady spot, much appreciated during weather extremes. Groundcovers may be hiding spots for vulnerable pupae and larvae.
6. **Grow a butterfly nursery.** Providing egg-laying sites and larval food sources helps you keep butterflies in your garden for longer periods. Each species of butterfly is choosy about where it lays its eggs, since that host plant will also provide food for the caterpillars that hatch.
7. **Give your butterflies a little sun.** Basking is a common butterfly behavior, especially in the mornings. Butterflies find flat, sunny spots (rocks or planters work well), then spread their wings and soak up the heat of the sun. Once their muscles warm up, they will fly on to the next order of business.
8. **Build your own mud puddle.** Butterflies get most of their moisture from flower nectar, but male butterflies require specific salts for reproduction. One way the home gardener can provide these nutrients is by sinking a pan into the soil, filling it half with sand and half with composted manure. If kept moist throughout the growing season, this puddle may become a gathering place for butterflies.
9. **Maintain your garden in a butterfly-friendly way.** Butterflies are sensitive to pesticides and can even be harmed by chemicals meant to control other insect species or by chemicals drifting from adjacent properties. By practicing good plant health care and investigating other forms of pest control, a gardener can ensure that such chemicals won't be necessary.
10. **Enjoy!** Butterfly gardening may sound like a labor-intensive process, but it is adaptable to your resources and desires. Even the addition of a few favorite nectar sources can benefit your local butterflies.

