

## Bewitching the Butterfly

More and more, gardeners are planning their gardens that attract wildlife to the yard, creating sunny spaces that promise not only the beauty of blooms, but also a vibrant and ever-changing wildlife display. One of the most popular choices, the butterfly garden offers enthusiasts a special challenge: gardeners can include host plants for the immature stages of the butterfly, as well as the nectar-rich flowers the adults love. This planting scheme assures an ever-growing population of these resplendent and elusive creatures.

Understanding the life cycle of the butterfly will help you determine which plants to grow in your garden. The adult female butterfly lays eggs, singly or in large groups (depending on the species), on the underside of leaves, and she is particularly attracted to sites with nectar-bearing flowers. The eggs hatch to reveal the larvae-or very hungry caterpillars-which feed on host plants such as carrots, parsley, dill, wood ornamentals or in the case of monarchs, plants in the milkweed family. The next stage, the pupa, attaches to twigs, leaves and grasses, its woven cocoon mimicking the colors of the surrounding landscape. When the metamorphosis is complete, the adult butterfly takes wing, but doesn't travel too far if your garden is replete with the flowers it craves.

The butterflies favorite blooms are the sweetest, most colorful ones, such as purple coneflower (*Echinacea* sp.), a three-foot daisy with bright pink recurved petals, which blossoms through the summer and attracts many species of butterfly, including tiger swallowtails, skippers, and viceroy. Another long-blooming daisy, blanket flower (*Gaillardia* sp.) is the choice of monarchs, painted ladies, swallowtails and fritillaries. Depending on the cultivar, blanket flower can be six inches to two feet tall and bloom in hues from purplish-red to red and yellow bicolor-a perfect choice for the front of the border. Bee balm (*Monarda* sp.) blooms in bright red, pink, or purple on two-to-three foot stems, and massed plantings of this scented flower will attract hummingbirds to your butterfly haven, as well. Butterfly bush (*Buddleia* sp.), a fragrant woody shrub reaching six to ten feet, features spiky purple, reddish purple, or pink flowers in late summer that will please a profusion of butterflies.

Other butterfly gourmet treats to consider: Sedum, an autumn bloomer with bright pink or yellow flowers and succulent foliage; Gay Feather (*Liatris* sp.) with hot pink spikes in summer; Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia* sp), a late

summer, early autumn mass of yellow; Asiatic and oriental lilies, fragrant spring and summer bloomers in a wide range of colors, and pincushion flower (*Scabiosa* sp.), a long-summer bloomer with a flattish head of pink, blue, white or purple.

Locating your butterfly sanctuary near a window will allow you and your children to watch the guests as they flit from flower to flower, undisturbed by your presence. Choose a calm, protected, and sunny spot for the garden and add a birdbath or shallow pool of water (for butterfly social gatherings) to complete the scenario.