Gardening for Caterpillars & Butterflies

Elizabeth Morales

Why plant a butterfly garden?

Local butterfly populations are decreasing due to habitat loss, pesticide use, and pollution.

Planting a butterfly garden creates new habitat, so they can complete their life cycle and thrive.

Besides, butterflies are beautiful and fascinating to watch.

Brookside GARDENS

For More Information:

Websites:

North American Butterfly Association
http://www.naba.org

National Wildlife Federation
http://www.nwf.org/backyard/butterflies.cfm

Monarch Watch
http://www.monarchwatch.org/garden/index.htm

Montana State University Children's Butterfly Site
www.kidsbutterfly.org

Green Spring Gardens Park
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/gsgp/infosheets/butterfliesand moths.pdf

Lep Log: Washington Area Butterfly Club
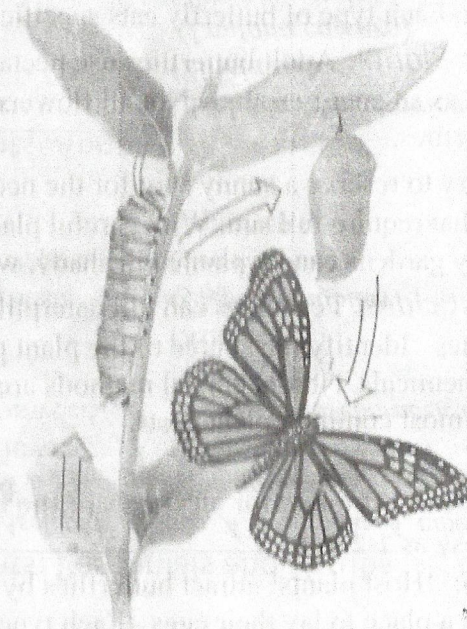http://leplog.wordpress.com

Books:

1. Burris, Judy and Richards, Wayne, The Lifecycles of Butterflies, Storey Publishing, 2006
2. Dole, Claire Hagen editor, The Butterfly Gardener's Guide (Brooklyn Botanic Garden All-Region Guides), Science Press, 2003
3. Roth, Sally, Attracting Butterflies & Hummingbirds to Your Backyard, Rodale Press, 2002
4. Stokes, Donald and Lillian, and Williams, Ernest, Stokes Butterfly Book : The Complete Guide to Butterfly Gardening, Identification, and Behavior, Little, Brown & Co., 1991
5. Xerces Society/Smithsonian Institution, Butterfly Gardening, Creating Summer Magic In Your Garden, Sierra Club Books, 1998

Text updated 2009
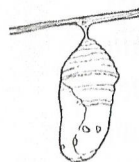Cover Illustration by Elizabeth Morales

Butterflies need:

- *Plants on which to lay eggs:* Called 'host' plants, these plants are eaten by the caterpillars after the eggs hatch. Host plants include trees, shrubs, vines, perennials and annuals. Each type of butterfly eats specific host plants.
- *Nectar Plants:* Adult butterflies use nectar from specific flowers as an energy source. Not all flowers are attractive to butterflies.
- *Sun:* Try to reserve a sunny spot for the nectar and host plants that require full sun. With careful plant selection, butterfly gardens can be planted in shady, wooded areas.
- *No Pesticides:* Pesticides can kill caterpillars and butterflies. Identify the source of the plant problem before using chemicals. Non-chemical methods are available to combat most common plant pests.

Plant your garden to provide for all stages of the butterfly life cycle. It's as easy as 1-2-3-4:

1. *EGG:* 'Host plants' attract butterflies by providing them with a place to lay their eggs. Each type of butterfly has a specific host plant (i.e.: Monarchs use milkweed). If your garden has a variety of host plants, you can count on attracting butterflies.
2. *CATERPILLAR:* The butterfly eggs will hatch into caterpillars. Their main goals are to hide from predators and eat. Plants can tolerate a lot of caterpillar feeding without suffering; they have the capacity to recover from feeding damage.
3. *CHRYSALIS:* Once fully grown, the caterpillars often leave the host plant and form their chrysalis in a protected place. The chrysalis is the stage in which the caterpillar develops into a butterfly.
4. *BUTTERFLY:* Adult butterflies usually feed on nectar while searching for a mate. Be sure to provide both nectar plants for butterflies and host plants for their eggs.

Plant Lists:

These lists are just the beginning. Please refer to the web sites and books listed for more information.

Common Host Plants and the Caterpillars that Eat Them:

White Oak (*Quecus alba*)- 18 species of hairstreak butterflies and 15 species of silk moths

Native Willows (*Salix sp.*)- comma, viceroy, red-spotted purple, mourning cloak, hairstreaks, sphinx moths

Wild Cherries (*Prunus sp.*) – viceroy, red spotted purple, tiger swallowtail, spring azure, and 10 species of silk moths

Hickory (*Carya sp.*)- tiger swallowtail, striped and banded hairstreaks, royal walnut moth

Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)-spring azure

Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) and **Spicebush** (*Lindera benzoin*)-tiger and spicebush swallowtails

Milkweed (*Asclepias sp.*)- monarch

Violets (several *Viola* species)-great spangled fritillary

Nectar Plants: Perennials and Shrubs

Milkweed - (*Asclepias syriaca, A. incarnata, A. tuberosa,* etc.)

Joe Pye Weed	(*Eupatorium* sp.)
Purple Coneflower	(*Echinacea purpurea*)
New York Ironweed	(*Vernonia noveboracensis*)
Goldenrods	(*Solidago* sp.)
Asters	(*Aster* sp.)
Sweet Pepperbush	(*Clethra alnifolia*)
Virginia Sweetspire	(*Itea virginica*)
Blazing Star	(*Liatris* sp.)

Nectar Plants: Annuals

Blood Flower	(*Asclepias curassavica*)
Zinnia	(*Zinnia* sp.)
Lantana	(*Lantana camara*)
Marigold	(*Tagetes patula*)
Egyptian Starcluster	(*Pentas lanceolata*)
Texas Sage	(*Salvia coccinea*)
Cosmos	(*Cosmos bipinnatus*)
Tall Verbena	(*Verbena bonariensis*)