

Butterfly & Hummingbird Gardens

How To Attract “Friendly” Wildlife To Your Landscape

When Americans were recently surveyed on what wildlife creature they'd most like to have around their house, butterflies were the “wings-down” winner. (It sure wasn't groundhogs.)

It seems we not only love butterflies' color and beauty but also the motion they bring to the garden. Perhaps most of all, they remind us that there's still a small slice of calming nature and sanity nearby in our oft-harried lifestyles — even in the middle of city concrete and suburban deckdom.

As a result, butterfly gardening has become one of the biggest trends lately. Almost as popular is the related hobby of attracting hummingbirds. Since both are attracted to yards in similar ways, we'll look at both here.

Attracting butterflies

The first step in attracting butterflies is to plant plants that they like, either for egg-laying purposes or for food.

In general, butterflies like fragrant plants with bright flowers, especially purple, yellow, pink, blue and white. They also like blossoms that are clustered or flat-topped (these make good landing platforms during feeding), and they like flowers with short tubes so it's easy for them to reach the nectar with their tongues (“proboscis,” if you want to get technical about it.)

The “host” or “nurse” plants where butterflies lay their eggs are often different from the plants that the adults prefer for feeding.

Milkweed (*Asclepias*), for example, is the only plant on which monarch butterflies will lay their eggs. When the caterpillars hatch and eat the milkweed, it gives them a taste that birds don't like — thus saving the eventual butterfly from that early predatory doom.

Dill, fennel, parsley, Queen Anne's lace, rue, snapdragons, hackberry trees, violets, tulip poplar trees, dogwoods, viburnums, lupines, asters and willows are other favored host plants.

Because several generations of butterflies come and go from spring to fall in our climate, it's important to plan your plantings so there's always something in bloom. A season-long smorgasbord of food flowers is what you're after, not a mass of just a few plants that all bloom right around the same time.

Go with enough variety and you'll probably meet this need without even trying. See the back of this flyer for a list of butterfly-favorite flowers.

Protecting your “investment”

Make sure you include shrubs in your butterfly garden along with the flowers. Besides offering egg-laying potential and nectar, they're also great protection from butterflies' two arch enemies -- birds and the wind.

The butterfly bush (*Buddleia*) is one of the best, but other good choices include lilacs, willows, abelias, summersweets (*Clethra*), honeysuckle, viburnums and hibiscus.

The ideal place for a butterfly garden is out in the sun next to a wooded area. Butterflies don't like shade, and they don't like wind. Besides shrubs, a nearby fence or your house can serve as a windbreak to shelter butterflies.

For the finishing touches, dig a hole and keep it muddy or set out a bird bath or clay bowl with a little mud around the edges. Butterflies not only need a little water for drinking, they also get salts out of mud.

If you want to be really nice, give them a few flat rocks or logs to rest on in the sun.

It's also extremely important not to spray your plants with insecticides. Before butterflies become butterflies, they are caterpillars that feed on leaves.

The caterpillars may do some damage to some plants, but it's mostly cosmetic and temporary. If you spray to stop that damage, you'll kill the caterpillars before they enter their chrysalises to miraculously transform into a beautiful butterfly.

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Attracting hummingbirds

Hummingbirds also are nectar feeders, so they appreciate the same kind of season-long flower smorgasbord as butterflies.

These birds return from the South to our area in mid-April to early May. Azaleas, rhododendrons, bleeding hearts and columbines are good early-season bloomers to welcome them back.

In general, hummingbirds like tubular flowers that are orange, red and pink. See the list below for some of their favorites.

You can also attract hummingbirds by hanging a feeder filled with either a commercial nectar or with a mix of one part sugar dissolved in four parts of water. (Avoid honey mixtures because they tend to ferment and grow potentially harmful mold.)

Hummingbirds aren't terribly bashful around people, so you can hang feeders right outside a window to get a good view of their unusual hovering movements.

Hummingbirds also like to fly through a mist to bathe. They'll love you if you attach a misting fountain to a birdbath or water garden.

To protect hummingbirds, keep feeders and birdbaths out of the reach of cats. And avoid spraying your flowers with pesticides that could harm hummingbirds as they feed.

Some of the best plants for attracting butterflies to the garden

Annuals	Salvia	Columbine	Russian sage	Dutchman's pipe
Alyssum	Snapdragons	Coreopsis	Rudbeckia	Hawthorn
Bachelor's buttons	Sunflowers	Daylilies	Salvia	Hibiscus
Borage	Verbena	Dianthus	Scabiosa	Honeysuckle
Cosmos	Vinca	Gaillardia	Sedum	Lilac
Dahlias	Zinnias	Goldenrod	Thalictrum	Rhododendron
Dill		Joe Pye weed	Veronica	Spicebush
Geraniums	Perennials	Jupiter's beard	Yarrow	Spirea
Heliotrope	Anise hyssop	Lavender		Summersweet
Lantana	Asters	Lupines	Trees, shrubs, vines	Trumpet vine
Marigolds	Astilbes	Mints	Abelia	Tulip poplar
Nicotiana	Boltonia	Monarda (beebalm)	Azalea	Viburnum
Parsley	Butterfly weed	Mums	Butterfly bush	Weigela
Pentas	Candytuft	Penstemons	Caryopteris	Wisteria
Impatiens	Cardinal flower	Phlox	Deutzia	
Rosemary	Catmint	Purple coneflowers	Dogwood	

Some of the best plants for attracting hummingbirds to the garden

Annuals	Shrubs, vines	Perennials	
Cleome	Abelia	Beebalm	Liatris
Geranium	Azalea	Bleeding heart	Lilies
Gladiolus	Bougainvillea (annual)	Cardinal flowers	Lupines
Fuchsia	Butterfly bush	Catmint	Penstemon
Impatiens	Coralberry	Columbine	Phlox
Nicotiana	Honeysuckle	Coralbells (Heuchera)	Red hot pokers
Petunias	Mandevilla (annual)	Crocsmia	Rose mallow
Salvia	Rhododendron	Daylilies	Salvia
Snapdragons	Rose of sharon	Dianthus (pinks)	Turtlehead (Chelone)
	Trumpet vine	Hollyhocks	
	Weigela		