

How To Create a Butterfly Garden by Jodi DeLong  
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In order to create a butterfly garden, you need to make the area welcoming to them. The first, and most crucial thing to do is to **not use pesticides** in your yard. Many pesticides are broad spectrum, and won't only kill the 'bad bugs' in your garden, but also the good ones. Even organic solutions should be used only as a last resort and only on the specific plant where you're having problems with pests or diseases.

Find out which species are resident in your area and the plants that they prefer as nectar plants. It is also important to provide plants on which the butterflies will lay their eggs and upon which caterpillars can feed.

### **Choosing the Right Spot**

A butterfly garden can range from a large plot of land, to a 5'x10' strip near a walkway to a window box or a container garden; whatever your gardening conditions are, you can create a site that attracts butterflies.

\* Butterflies are more active in sunny warm weather, so open sunny areas are an important factor for the garden. Some protection from the wind is also necessary, and you can provide this by planting shrubby nectar and food plants like buddleia, honeysuckle, spice bush and Hawthorn. A small fence, a row of shrubs, evergreen trees or even a large rock can serve as a shelter from the wind.

\* Butterflies cannot drink directly from open water so it is a good idea to create "puddles" of moist sand or mud. Placing a few rocks or sticks in this "puddle" allows the butterflies to perch and drink. Rocks also provide a site where butterflies can bask to store body heat from the sun.

\* Butterflies are attracted to plants that offer an abundant supply of food in a concentrated area.

\* Gardeners should include a range of different plants with varying bloom times so butterflies will have a reliable food source throughout the growing season.

\* Showy displays with several types of flowers blooming at all times will be sure to capture butterflies' attention.

\* Avoid windy sites, and be careful of insecticides that can harm butterflies.

### **Types of Plants**

Although there is still much that isn't understood about butterflies and their preferences, many species prefer plants with bright coloured flowers in shades of

red, yellow, orange, pink and purple, (yellows and purples appear to be the most favoured) and they seem to be especially attracted to masses of one colour. For best effect, plant drifts of perennials or annuals in your butterfly garden; many of us prefer to plant our gardens in such a manner anyway, preferring to have large swathes of colour rather than a polka-dot effect that merely looks muddy from a distance.

Butterflies are particular about the plants they feed on. Determining which types of butterflies are in your particular location will help you select which flowers you should grow. Select plants for both the adult butterflies and the caterpillars, which will entice adults to mate and lay eggs in your garden. If at all possible, have a wild area in your yard, which you don't mow or otherwise disturb, which will also help to attract some species of butterflies.

Although most butterflies rely on nectar as their source of food, some rely on more curious types of food, such as manure or decomposing fruits: banana, apple or watermelon, so a small dish with either of these offerings will attract such fussy diners.

Butterflies also need a source of water, but they can't use a birdbath because it's too deep. What you can do is put some coarse sand in a shallow birdbath and keep that wet, or create a wet depression or puddle in your yard for butterflies to sip from. You may sometimes see gatherings of butterflies in a wet spot, "puddling": they will sip moisture and also get minerals from the soil under the puddle. Male butterflies apparently do this more than females do, and it's thought that possibly the minerals and salts they acquire are used in creating female-attracting lures called pheromones.

A good reference site on butterflies of Canada is found at the Canadian Biodiversity Information Facility, <http://tinyurl.com/32kz9j>.