

# Butterfly Garden Requirements

## Requirements

**Light:** Six or more hours per day of full sun should be provided, although some butterflies will visit certain shade or partial shade plants.

**Water:** Once established, no additional watering is needed, if native plants are used. Adult butterflies (especially young males) tend to seek low spots filled with mud ("puddling") where they obtain not only moisture, but also minerals. A container of wet sand may also be used. Add sticks or rocks for perching.

**Elevation/Topography:** A flat or slightly sloped location that is protected from wind and that is suitable for native plant growth is best.

**Soil:** Loose, well drained loam soil is preferred for this garden, but native butterfly plants will grow in almost any soil and moisture levels.

**Plant Materials:** Native plants are recommended and are available for many different types of butterfly habitats. Host plants (for eggs, larva) and nectar plants (for adults) should be considered when selecting plants. Adults tend to prefer flowers that are flattened, forming a landing platform. Orange, red or yellow flowers that are short-tubular in shape are best. You should plan for continuous blooming throughout the summer. Consult the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' *Butterfly Gardens* brochure for plant lists.

**Planting and Maintenance:** Nectar and host plants should be planted in masses (clumps) rather than rows or randomly, because butterflies are attracted by color as well as scent (prefer heavily perfumed flowers).

## Special Considerations

**Rocks:** Include some large rocks, preferably dark in color (heat absorption) for basking. Butterflies need a body temperature of 85° - 100°F for flying.

**Wind Protection:** Due to their delicate anatomy, butterflies should be protected from wind in a sheltered spot.

**Overwintering Spots:** Log piles, tree crevices and under tree bark provide winter habit for non-migrating butterflies in all life stages.

**Nearby Sheltering Trees and Shrubs:** Butterflies will often hide in nearby foliage when not nectaring.

**Pesticides:** Avoid using insecticides and/or herbicides in or near your garden.

## Plant List for Dry Soil

black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)  
butterfly-weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)  
nodding wild rye (*Elymus canadensis*)  
horsemint (*Monarda punctata*)  
downy sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*)  
foxglove beardstongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)  
hoary vervain (*Verbena stricta*)  
June grass (*Koeleria macrantha*)  
sand coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*)  
leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*)  
little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)  
lupine (*Lupinus perennis*)  
pale coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*)  
prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)  
purple prairie clover (*Dalea purpurea*)  
rough blazing-star (*Liatris aspera*)  
showy goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*)  
side-oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)  
azure aster (*Symphyotrichum oolentangiense*)  
smooth aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*)  
stiff aster (*Oligoneuron album*)  
stiff goldenrod (*Oligoneuron rigidum*)  
wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)  
wild petunia (*Ruella humilis*)  
yellow coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*)

## Plant List for Medium Soil

black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)  
blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*)  
brown-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia triloba*)  
butterfly-weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)  
nodding wild rye (*Elymus canadensis*)  
golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*)  
common ironweed (*Vernonia fasciculata*)  
sand coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*)  
little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)  
New England aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)  
nodding wild onion (*Allium cernuum*)  
Ohio goldenrod (*Solidago ohioensis*)  
pale coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*)  
prairie blazing-star (*Liatris pycnostachya*)  
prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)  
purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)  
purple prairie clover (*Dalea purpurea*)  
rough blazing-star (*Liatris aspera*)  
side-oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)  
azure aster (*Symphyotrichum oolentangiense*)  
smooth aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*)  
stiff goldenrod (*Oligoneuron rigidum*)  
sweet black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia subtomentosa*)  
wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)  
yellow coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*)