

Butterfly Gardening Program Summary

Basic Butterfly Requirements

- a. plentiful supply of nectar producing flowers
- b. sunny location
- c. some protection from wind
- d. variety of plant heights, bloom times (April-September)
- e. nearby source of host plants on which to lay their eggs
- f. protection from insecticides
- e. dark surfaces (hardscaping such as rocks, logs, statuary) to help them warm up in morning
- h. puddling areas to get water

The Perennial (Native) Advantage

In planning to add plants to your yard, you can use a mix of annuals and perennials, however perennials are best.

- a. Butterflies use some annuals (eg., salvias, lantana, zinnias); however, the majority of butterfly plants are perennials.
- b. Since butterflies favor strong scented flowers, annuals sometimes don't fill this bill. They are often bred to provide large colorful blooms at the expense of nectar production.
- c. Ideally, you also need to provide a source of nectar from spring until autumn. Established perennials can most easily provide butterflies with nectar at all times, especially spring (as well as provide you with a season-spanning tapestry of color).
- d. You will need to plant a variety of plant species with different blooming periods, so that as the blooming period of one is fading, another takes its place.
- e. Native perennials (mostly prairie wildflowers) are a sure bet, since our native butterflies are adapting to using them as both host and nectar plants, and they are the hardiest.

Planning & Layout

- a. South and southeast exposures are the ideal, since they will get full sun and experience the least amount of wind.
- b. Place the tallest plants at back of garden.
- c. Paint with broad brushstrokes. When designing flower beds, most gardeners prefer massed plantings of flowers over a salt and pepper approach for aesthetic reasons. Butterflies prefer this as well.
- d. Butterflies seem to prefer pink, lavender and yellow flowers, so include lots of these.
- e. If you want to provide host plants for caterpillars, these can be planted in a naturalistic "wildflower meadow" patch or strip in another location. Many of these plants are considered weeds by most people and will look wild.
- f. If possible, provide some dark colored rocks. Butterflies use these dark surfaces to warm up in the morning.
- g. Puddling areas can be a basin of sand near a water source to keep it moist, an area of moist soil from sump pumps, rain gardens, etc. or even a bird bath.