

Drift Away & Relax Watching Butterflies In Your Yard

There is nothing more relaxing than sitting in a chair or swing on your patio, deck, or yard and watching butterflies make a graceful trip around your yard. Even in today's hectic times all "seems at peace and as the Lord intended" as a butterfly pauses to sip some nectar from a flower blossom or to warm itself on a warm rock. In this article we'll discuss ways to encourage butterflies to visit and stay with you!



Butterflies are the small wonders of our universe. They fascinate us with their delightful colors and fanciful flight. They play a critical role in the food chain as well as pollinating many crops and flowers.



Many people ask me "What is the best way to attract butterflies?" Butterflies are easily attracted to your backyard or pond bank by planting a variety of plants and flowers that nourish both the adult butterfly and the caterpillars. Without caterpillars, there are no adults. Each butterfly species prefers specific food and plant sources. The below chart shows what host plants you should plant to attract different butterflies.

Butterfly	Host Plant
Black Swallowtail	Carrot, Dill, Fennel, Parsley
Great Spangled Fritillary	Violet
Monarch	Milkweed
Pearly Crescentspot	Aster
Pipevine Swallowtail	Pipevine (Calico Pipe, Dutchman's Pipe, Rooster Flower, Virginia Snakeroot)
Red-Spotted Purple	Wild Cherry, Willow
Spicebush Swallowtail	Sassafras, Spicebush
Viceroy	Cherry, Plum, Poplar, Willow



When it comes to nectar plants, you get the best results with "natives". Think about it: If God put certain plants in your area, doesn't it make sense that those flowers will attract the most butterflies? While across Pond Boss country what species of plant is best for your specific area will vary a bit, the following are proven native nectar sources that will fit most environments.

Native Nectar Plants

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| Wild Columbine | Swamp & Whorled Milkweed |
| Butterfly Weed | Blue Lobelia |
| Prairie Blazing Star | Lance Leaf Coreopsis |
| New England Aster | Orange, Purple Missouri & Sweet Coneflowers |
| Cardinal Flower | Rose Verbena |



My favorites on the list are Butterfly Weed, Milk Weeds, and Coneflowers for drier spots and Lobelia and Cardinal Flower for wetter areas. Want lots of Monarchs? Plant New England Aster, as it's in full bloom when Monarchs migrate in August and September! Annuals that readily attract butterflies include Lantana, Chrysanthemums, Marigolds, Cosmos, and Salvia. Note: In fall do not dead head these or Coneflowers, as you'll get an extra reward when Gold Finches, Juncos, and others visit these plants and eat the flower heads as a winter food source!



When choosing a spot for your butterfly nectar plants, remember that a sunny spot protected from the wind will be preferred by the butterflies. Add some light colored flat rocks and you'll see butterflies use them in the morning and on cool days as a "warming spot". You'll also find butterflies readily come to a "sand bed that you can keep moist".



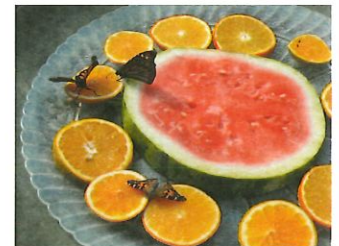
A fun project to do with children is to make a butterfly bed. Slightly dig out an area shaped like a butterfly. Arrange light colored rocks in the shape of a butterfly and lay these on a bed of sand with some salt mixed in. Line the bed with black plastic to keep the salt from leaking into the soil. The plastic also helps the butterfly bed to stay moist longer between the rocks!

People ask me, "Do butterfly houses and feeders work?" There have been several studies run and none of them have proven that butterfly houses will readily attract butterflies, so I don't recommend them. Having said that, many folks feel a butterfly garden isn't complete without one! Butterfly feeders DO work. There are a couple of secrets for the best feeders results. We've worked with butterfly farm experts and have found that using a nectar that contains essential salts and Orchard extracts as an attractant in addition to sugar, greatly increases nectar consumption.

Remember placing your feeder "down low where the wind don't blow" gives much better results. I hang mine on a 24-36" garden hook where it hangs slightly above a flowerbed in a sunny, protected spot. Last but not least, don't forget to provide fruit!



Most butterfly feeders have spikes that readily hold a slice of banana or a piece of watermelon. In the last issue of Pond Boss, we discussed putting out a "fruit plate of spoiled fruit for hummers and butterflies". During Monarch migration, make sure you put out lots of watermelon, as it's a Monarch's favorite!



Without a doubt the number one thing you have to do is "quit using chemical pesticides and fertilizers and herbicides." I speak from personal experience as after going "cold turkey" and stopping the use of all of the above, I can't believe how the populations of butterflies has seemed to explode in our backyard! Not just in numbers, but in types! After switching to an "organic" non-chemical lawn program, we've started attracting many more butterflies and songbirds! Butterflies in particular seem to be able to sense that "a chemical laden environment is not the place for them!"

Try some of these ideas and you'll soon be "drifting away" as you relax and watch butterflies glide by! Enjoy the moment and don't forget "Nature is God's stress reliever. Take time today to listen to the birds sing!"

Bird Man Mel

Bananas have *Ahh* Peel

To give your Hummingbirds & Butterflies an additional treat, you can hang banana skins, which attract fruit flies, a tasty, protein-rich part of their diet. There are fruit spikes on our Butterfly Feeder that work well to hold a banana slice.

