

# Butterfly



# Friendly

**B**utterflies are entrancing creatures that float and flit through the garden, sipping nectar from the flowers.

Flowering plants provide nectar for butterflies and in return the butterflies transfer pollen from flower to flower. Butterflies are attracted to bright and colourful flowers and some prefer certain colours over others – eg, swallowtails prefer red. They prefer flowers that provide some sort of platform for their dainty feet, such as a flat rim of petals around a single flower or a flower spike or flower head with many single flowers crowded close together. Butterflies have long, delicate, coiled tubes for sucking water, nectar and other plant juices. This enables them to probe deep inside tubular flowers or delve down amongst the spiky stamens of bottlebrushes and other similar flowers. The following are some of the native plants that provide nectar for our butterfly visitors.

Everyone loves butterflies.

**So, how do we attract these delightful creatures to be a permanent feature in our gardens?**

Butterflies are attracted to gardens for two reasons – the first is when the adult butterflies are seeking nectar from flowers for their own sustenance - the second is when the females are ready to lay their eggs on the right food plants for their young caterpillars. Many people plant nectar-producing plants that will feed the adult butterflies, but

bear in mind, every butterfly was once a caterpillar, and each type of butterfly has its own particular plant or group of plants on which its caterpillars will need to feed.

Most butterflies are quite specific about which plants they will lay their eggs on. This is because most plants have chemical defences and the digestive systems of the different caterpillars have evolved to neutralise the chemicals in the various plants on which they feed. Happily, research by dedicated people has revealed the correct host plants for many of our butterfly larvae. By growing these plants you can attract the adult butterflies to your garden. There they will lay their eggs, which will become caterpillars, then chrysalises, and finally a new generation of adult butterflies. To encourage butterflies to live and breed in your garden, all you have to do is grow plants with flowers that produce nectar for the adults or food plants for the caterpillars.

Remember, every butterfly was once a caterpillar, and you must be prepared to accept some chewed leaves. However, birds and predatory insects will usually keep their numbers in check.



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