

BUTTERFLY GARDENING

INFORMATION SHEET

Butterfly Facts

Butterflies are found on all continents except Antarctica. Worldwide, butterflies are estimated to total approximately 20,000 and moths are estimated to total approximately 200,000. In the US and Canada, there are over 750 species of butterflies (575 in the continental US) and over 11,000 species of moths. In Arkansas, there are about 127 species of butterflies and about 1,300 species of moths. May-August is the best time to find them. The average life span of the adult butterfly is one month. Some adults live for only a week and others live over 10 months. Butterflies taste with their feet and smell with their antenna for the chemicals of their preferred host plants. Butterflies drink nectar from flowers through their tongues, which act like straws.

The difference between butterflies and moths:

- Moths fly at night, have feathered antennae and rest with their wings open
- Butterflies fly during the day, have knob-ended antennae and rest with their wings closed

There are four stages in a butterfly's life: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis) and adult (butterfly). This process of change is called metamorphosis or "change of form". The time period for each of these stages varies with each butterfly as well as which stage they will overwinter.

Key Elements for Butterfly Gardens

- **Sun** *butterflies need a sunny open area to refuel for flight, rocks are natural warm places*
- **Shelter from wind** *butterflies need a warm area to refuel for flight and an easy fly-zone*
- **Food plants** *re-create their habitat for all seasons to attract butterflies*
 - **Adult food: Nectar plants** *to attract butterflies to the garden*
 - **Larval food: Host plants** *to keep them there: to lay eggs & as a caterpillar food supply*
- **No pesticides used in the garden** *better to have a few pests than no butterflies*
- **Water source nearby** *for both the butterfly and the plants, important for puddling behavior*
- **Butterfly to attract**
Choose the butterfly to attract, research the butterfly's distribution/range, habitat types, preferred adult and larval plants (many are very specific), time of year for flight periods

Top 10 nectar plants for attracting butterflies

1. Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia spp.)
2. Joe-Pye Weed (Eupatorium spp.)
3. Liatris (Liatris spp.)
4. Coreopsis (Coreopsis spp.)
5. Pentas (Pentas spp.)
6. Aster (Aster spp.)
7. Butterfly weed (Asclepias tuberosa)
8. Lantana (Lantana camara)
9. Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea)
10. Butterfly bush (Buddleia spp.)

Source: *The Stokes Butterfly Book*

Top trees for hosting butterflies, *in order of popularity among the most butterflies*

1. Oak (Quercus spp.)
2. Willow (Salix spp.)
3. Cherry (Prunus spp.)
4. Aspen, Cottonwood, Poplar (Populus spp.)
5. Hackberry (Celtis spp.)
6. Pine (Pinus spp.)
7. Juniper, Cedar (Juniperus spp.)
8. Citrus (Citrus spp.) orange, lemon
9. Elm (Ulmus spp.)
10. Birch (Betula spp.)
11. Dogwood (Cornus spp.)
12. Red bay (Persea borbonia)

Others: Ash (Fraxinus spp.), Hawthorn (Crataegus spp.), Maple (Acer spp.), Sumac (Rhus spp.), Locust (Robina spp.), Pawpaw (Asimina spp.), Tuliptree (Liriodendron tulipifera), Mimosa (Albizia julibrissin), Sassafras (Sassafras albidum), Hop tree (Ptelea trifoliata), Lilac (Syringa spp.), Buckeye (Aesculus spp.), Hornbeam (Carpinus spp.).

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REFERENCES

Butterfly societies addresses

The Lepidopterists' Society, 1900 John St., Manhattan Beach, CA 90266-2608;

<http://www.furman.edu/~snyder/snyder/lep/> (Lepidoptera: the large order of the "scaled winged insects" comprised of butterflies, moths and skippers)

The Xerces Society, 4828 SE Hawthorne Blvd. Portland, OR 97215 (503) 232-6639;

<http://www.xerces.org/>

Young Entomologist's Society, 1915 Peggy Place, Lansing, MI 48910; (517) 887-0499

<http://members.aol.com/YESbugs/bugclub.html> (Entomology: branch of zoology that deals with insects)

North American Butterfly Association, 4 Delaware Rd., Morristown, N.J. 07960;

<http://www.naba.org/>

Butterfly gardening references

- Butterfly Gardening, The Xerces Society (Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1990).
- Peterson Field Guide: Eastern Butterflies, Paul A. Opler & Vichai Malikul (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1992)
- Stokes Butterfly Book, Donald & Lillian Stokes and Ernest Williams (Little Brown, Boston, 1991)
- The Audubon Society Field Guide to No. American Butterflies, Robert M. Pyle (Knopf, N.Y., 1981).

Butterfly gardening websites

Smithsonian Institution <http://www.si.edu/resource/tours/gardens/butterfly/start.htm>

Hot list of butterfly sites <http://www.mesc.nbs.gov/butterfly/butterfly-hotlist.html>

USGS: Butterflies of No. America <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/bflyusa/bflyusa.htm>

The Butterfly website <http://butterflywebsite.com/>

Butterfly Articles online <http://butterflywebsite.com/Articles/constructlist.cfm?type=butterflygardening>

Monarch Watch <http://www.monarchwatch.org/>

Caterpillar Hostplant Database <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/entomology/hostplants/>