A butterfly garden is an easy way both to see more butterflies and to contribute towards their conservation. It is easy to increase the number and variety of butterflies in your yard. A butterfly garden is about more than just flowers. You can make your garden butterfly-friendly by offering protection from wind and rain, providing a food source that is free of pesticides, and allowing some weeds and wildflowers to serve as host plants on which butterflies can lay their eggs. Other needs include plenty of sunshine and mud puddles where they can sip needed nutrients.

**Adult Butterfly Nectar Plants**

Adult butterflies are attracted by varying degrees to a flower's color, shape, or smell, but the biggest draw is nectar. Once a butterfly discovers the location of its favorite flowers, it will come back again and again. An abundance of flowers will invite butterflies to explore. Flowering plants in large groups are preferable to a few isolated plants spread around. You can plant a seasonal succession of butterfly favorites! "A" on our butterfly plant list indicates an Adult butterfly nectar plant.

**Caterpillar Host Plants**

To get the most out of your butterfly garden, provide host plants for females to lay their eggs on and for hatched caterpillars to feed on. Just think of the nibbled-on plants as a sacrifice to new life. Most caterpillars depend on only one or two host plants anyway, so if you plant extra you probably won’t even notice the damage. Monarch caterpillars feed exclusively on milkweed, whereas the painted lady prefers thistles. Some “weed” plants such as stinging nettles are excellent caterpillar host plants; allow them to grow in an out-of-the-way corner to provide caterpillar forage. “C” on our butterfly plant list indicates a Caterpillar host plant.

**Sunshine & Shelter**

Situate your butterfly garden in a sheltered area that receives at least six hours of direct sunlight. Butterflies can't regulate their body temperature very well, and this gives them a place to bask in the sun—especially important during cooler springtime weather. Butterflies start fluttering with a minimum air temperature of 60°F, but they fly best when it's warmer than 80°F. That's why you’ll sometimes see them absorbing the sun's heat with outstretched wings.

A raindrop on a butterfly is like a barrel of water poured on a human. An open shed or any tree with broad leaves provides a good place to hide. Let pieces of bark, rocks, and leaves stay on the ground for butterflies to crawl under. A log pile stacked crosswise will also create a safe haven with many open nooks and crannies.

**Puddling/Water**

When butterflies gather around a mud puddle, they are sipping needed nutrients as well as water. Provide a place to puddle by burying a bucket filled with wet sand or soil, then placing a few sticks or rocks on top of the sand for butterflies to perch on. Be sure to fill the bucket with water when necessary.
Shrubs, Trees, and Vines

- Apple, Crabapple (Malus species) - A, C
- Bluebeard (Caryopteris species) - A
- Blueberry (Vaccinium species) - A
- Buddleia, Butterfly Bush (Buddleia - choose non-invasive varieties) - A
- California Lilac, Wild Lilac (Ceanothus species) - A, C
- Dogwood, tree or red-twigs (Cornus species) - A, C
- Douglas Fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii) - C
- Elderberry (Sambucus species) - A
- Hops (Humulus species) - C
- Honeysuckle (Lonicera species) - A
- Incense Cedar (Calocedrus species) - C
- Lilac (Syringa species) - A
- Maple (Acer species) - C
- Manzanita (Arctostaphylos species) - C
- Mock orange (Philadelphus species) - A
- Oregon Grape (Mahonia aquifolium) - A
- Pine (Pinus species) - C
- Rhododendron (Rhododendron species) - A, C
- Rose, wild (Rosa species) - A, C
- Serviceberry (Amelanchier alnifolia) - A, C
- Spiraea (Spiraea species) - A, C
- Twinberry (Lonicera involucrata) - A
- Willow (Salix species) - A, C

Groundcovers and Herbs

- Borage (Borago) - C
- Kinnikinnick (Arctostaphylos uva-ursi) - C
- Lavender (Lavandula species) - A
- Mint (Mentha species) - A
- Oregano (Origanum species) - A
- Salal (Gaultheria shallon) - C
- Thyme (Thymus species) - A
butterfly plants

Annuals

- Ageratum (Ageratum) - A
- Calendula - A
- Clarkia - A
- Cosmos (Cosmos species) - A
- Lantana (Lantana species) - A
- Marigold, French (Tagetes patula) - A
- Nasturtium (Tropaeolum majus) – A, C
- Sunflower (Helianthus species) – A, C
- Sweet William (Dianthus barbatus) - A
- Verbena (Verbena species) - A
- Zinnia (Zinnia elegans) - A

Perennials

- Aster (Aster species) - A
- Basket-of-Gold (Aurinia) - A
- Beard-Tongue (Penstemon) – A
- Bee Balm (Monarda didyma) – A
- Bellflower (Campanula species) – A
- Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia species) - A
- Blanket Flower (Gaillardia species) - A
- Bleeding Heart, Western (Dicentra formosa) – C
- Butterfly Weed (Asclepias species) – A, C
- Candytuft (Iberis species) - A
- Catmint (Nepeta species) - A
- Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea) - A
- Coreopsis (Coreopsis species) - A
- Daisy (Chrysanthemum species) – A
- Dusty Miller (Senecio species) – A, C
- Gayfeather (Liatris species) - A
- Globe Thistle (Echinops species) - A
- Goldenrod (Solidago species) - A
- Lupine (Lupinus species) – A, C
Perennials, continued
- Monkeyflower (Mimulus species) - A
- Phlox (Phlox paniculata, P. carolina) - A
- Pincushion Flower (Scabiosa species) - A
- Salvia, Sage (Salvia species) - A
- Sedum (Sedum species) – A, C
- Sea Holly (Eryngium species) - A
- Statice (Limonium species) - A
- Thrift, Sea Pink (Armeria species) - A
- Verbena (Verbena species) - A
- Yarrow (Achillea species) - A
- Violet (Viola species) – C

Wildflowers and Weeds
- Coneflowers (Echinacea species) - A
- Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale) - C
- Fireweed (Epilobium) – A, C
- Goldenrod (Solidago) - A
- Milkweed, Butterfly Weed (Asclepias species) – A, C
- Pearly everlasting (Anaphalis margaritacea) – A, C
- Stinging Nettle (Urtica dioica) - C
- Thistle (Cirsium species) – A, C

Note: when choosing plants as nectar sources, choose native, species, or single-flowering forms over very highly hybridized or double-flowering varieties. Most coneflowers, for example, are excellent nectar sources, but the double-flowered ones whose cones have been replaced by additional petals are not.