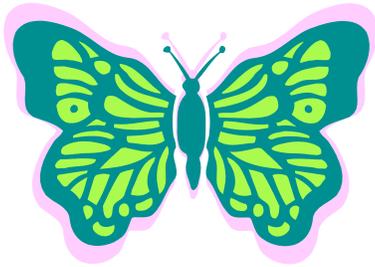


A Beginner's Guide to Butterfly Gardening



Growing plants that attract butterflies is a great way to beautify your garden and invite natural pollinators for your plants. Pollinators play an important role by transferring pollen from one flower to another, which is necessary for the production of fruits and seeds. You can start your butterfly garden by planting *nectar plants*, flowers that produce nectar for adult butterflies. To attract butterflies during their entire life cycle, you can also grow *host plants*, which offer food for the caterpillars (larvae).

Life Cycle of the Butterfly

The life cycle of the butterfly has four distinct stages: egg, caterpillar (larva), pupa (in which the caterpillar forms a cocoon and undergoes internal changes), and adult butterfly. Adult female butterflies lay their eggs on or near their host plants. After the eggs hatch, tiny caterpillars are born, and as they eat the host plant they grow larger. When the caterpillar is mature, it will stop feeding and form a chrysalis (cocoon). Generally, after 10–14 days, the adult butterfly will emerge from the chrysalis (some species overwinter in the chrysalis stage), looking for nectar plants, a mate, and (for female butterflies) a place to lay eggs.

What Do Butterflies Need?

Nectar Plants and Host Plants

A butterfly has different food requirements during the different phases of its life. All adult butterflies depend on nectar plants as their food source; females search for host plants on which to lay their eggs; and growing caterpillars feed on the host plants.

Certain butterflies need specific plants, while other butterflies can feed off a larger variety of plants. Native plants are important to a butterfly garden, since they are familiar sources of nectar and food for caterpillars. Some cultivated varieties of native plants do not produce as much nectar as the wild forms. (The butterflies that are native to the Bronx and their nectar and host plants are listed below.)

Minerals and Water

Butterflies need water and salt and other minerals, which can be found in mud puddles, dung, or rotting fruit. You can create a mud puddle by making a small depression in the ground, lining the edges with pebbles, and adding water each morning. It is best if the puddles dry out by the end of the day.

Shelter

Butterflies also need shelter from the wind and inclement weather, a place to form their chrysalis, and a safe spot to spend the winter. Trees, large shrubs, or hedges form windbreaks. Leaf litter, old logs, and branches provide protected places to overwinter. Bushes, tall grasses, and piles of leaves or sticks are ideal areas for cocoons.

Plenty of Sunshine

Butterflies need to be warm in order to fly. Choose a sunny and protected place for your butterfly plants. Large, flat rocks placed in the sun will also provide a place for butterflies to warm themselves. Sunny spots are also good for eggs and caterpillars to mature more rapidly.

No Pesticides

Pesticides can kill butterflies and caterpillars, which are extremely sensitive to toxins.

Butterflies of the Bronx and Their Food Sources



Black Swallowtail

Nectar Plants: Butterfly Bush, Phlox, Clover, Thistle, Azalea
Host Plants: Rue, Carrots, Parsley, Dill



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

Nectar Plants: Butterfly Bush, Lilac, Milkweed, Thistle, Phlox, Honeysuckle
Host Plants: Lilac, Cherry Birch, Hornbeam, Ash, Willow, Spicebush



Clouded Sulphur

Nectar Plants: Aster, Clover, Phlox, Goldenrod, Milkweed, Marigold
Host Plants: Many legumes, Clover, Alfalfa, Vetch



Checkered White

Nectar Plants: Aster, Butterfly Bush, Centaurea, Alfalfa, Mustards
Host Plants: Mustard family



Buckeye

Nectar Plants: Aster, Coreopsis, Chicory, Centaurea, Milkweed, Mint
Host Plants: Snapdragon, Toadflax, Monkey Flower, Plantain



Spring Azure

Nectar Plants: Aster, Butterfly Bush, Centaurea, Holly, Cherry.
Host Plants: Many trees and shrubs, Dogwood, Viburnum, Cherry, Sumac



Monarch

Nectar Plants: Dogbane, Butterfly Bush, Milkweed, Cosmos, Lilac, Goldenrod.
Host Plants: Common Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, and other Milkweeds



Pearl Crescent

Nectar Plants: Mint, Clover, Aster, Fleabane, Zinnia, Milkweed
Host Plants: Aster, Michemas Daisy