

## Gardener's Guideline #3 Using Native Plants To Attract Butterflies

The **Gardener's Guidelines Series** provide advice and information in the use of native plants in home gardens. They are available from the Society: visit the website or write for a copy.

GG #1 *Obtaining and Using Native Plants*  
GG #2 *Collecting Seeds from Native Plants*  
GG #3 *Using Native Plants to Attract Butterflies*

This series is designed to increase awareness of the diversity of native plants and their value to home gardeners. By offering these guidelines, we can protect Maryland's native flora while still enjoying their many benefits in the garden. These were adapted from guidelines by the Canadian Wildflower Society, now the North American Native Plant Society.

### Maryland Native Plant Society

The Maryland Native Plant Society uses education, research, and community service to increase awareness and appreciation of native plants and their habitats leading to their conservation and restoration.

Membership is open to all who are interested in Maryland's native plants and their habitats. Preserving Maryland's natural heritage, increasing knowledge about native plants, and helping to further the Society's mission are our goals.

The Maryland Native Plant Society sponsors monthly meetings, workshops, field trips, and an annual fall conference.



**Maryland Native  
Plant Society**

P.O. Box 4877, Silver Spring, MD 20914  
[www.mdflora.org](http://www.mdflora.org)

### Bibliography

Visit the Maryland Native Plant Society web site for an extensive bibliography on native plants.

#### Larval Host Plant Lists on the Web

<http://home.earthlink.net/~drkilmer/Plantlist.html>  
[www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/bflyusa/md/toc.htm](http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/bflyusa/md/toc.htm)

#### The Butterfly Garden:

**Turning Your Garden, Window Box, or Backyard Into A Beautiful Home For Butterflies**  
Mathew Tekulski; 1985; Harvard Common Press

#### Butterfly Gardening:

**Creating Summer Magic in Your Garden**  
Xerces Society; 1998; Sierra Club Books

**Butterflies Through Binoculars: The East**  
Jeffrey Glassburg, 1999; Oxford University Press

#### Butterflies and Moths: A Guide to the More Common American Species.

Robert T. Mitchell and Herbert S. Zim 1987; Golden Press. *Includes many caterpillars and host plants.*

#### Peterson First Guide to Caterpillars

Paul A. Opler; 1993; Houghton Mifflin

#### The Wild Lawn Handbook:

**Alternatives To The Traditional Front Lawn**  
Stevie Daniels; 1997; IDG Books Worldwide

#### Washington Area Butterfly Club

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Maryland Native Plant Society  
Gardener's Guideline #3

# Using Native Plants to Attract Butterflies



Artwork © Gary Pendleton

### Gardener's Guideline 3

#### Using Native Plants to Attract Butterflies

Most people garden for pleasure and butterflies add another dimension to the experience. Native plants are ideal for butterfly gardening because native plants provide food sources, while butterflies aid in flower pollination. Native plants increase the diversity of the plants and animals found in the yard, while supporting native ecological relationships required for a healthy environment.

1. Do not disrupt native plant communities, either in the wild or on your property.
2. Select butterflies and plants that are native in your immediate bioregion. They are best adapted to the local climate, predators, soil and disease.
3. Plant true native species. Many cultivars (of both exotic and native plants) are bred for unique flower or leaf characteristics and may lack the nectar butterflies need.
4. Obtain nursery-propagated plants. Refer to Gardener's Guideline #1 for more information.
5. Reduce the use of insecticides. Even the "safe" BT kills butterflies and caterpillars.
6. Provide food for adult butterflies, generally flower nectar. Several species feed only on tree sap or rotting fruit.
7. Grow caterpillar food — larval host plants. Butterfly caterpillars (larvae) require specific host plants on which to feed, and female butterflies will search for plants on which to lay their eggs.
8. Remember, caterpillars eat the plants, so provide enough for both the butterfly and your enjoyment.
9. Provide a shallow dish filled with damp sand or mud for water and necessary minerals.
10. Locate your butterfly gardens in a sunny area sheltered from the wind.
11. Minimize mowed areas. A mowed lawn is not a hospitable habitat nor does it provide sufficient cover for most butterflies.

#### A Sampling of Native Nectar Plants

- Indian hemp or Dogbane (*Apocynum cannabinum*)
- Milkweeds (*Asclepias incarnata*, *A. tuberosa*, *A. syrica*)
- Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
- Black cohosh (*Cimicifuga americana*, *C. racemosa*)
- Sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)
- Joe-Pye weeds (*Eupatorium fistulosum*, *E. purpureum*)
- Hardy ageratum (*Eupatorium coelestinum*)
- Sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*)
- Swamp sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*)
- Blazing star (*Liatris spicata*)
- Pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*)
- Mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*,)
- Goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*)
- New York ironweed (*Vernonia novaboracensis*)

#### A Few Native Larval Host Plants

Over 100 species of butterflies are found in Maryland, this is a list of a few butterflies and examples of their native larval host plants. Some butterflies have several larval host plants, see the bibliography for additional information.



- American Lady – Pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*)
- American Snout – Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)
- Black Swallowtail – Black snakeroot (*Sanicula canadensis*)
- Gray Hairstreak – White Oak (*Quercus alba*)
- Great Spangled & Variegated Fritillaries – Violets (*Viola spp.*)
- Hackberry Emperor – Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)
- Monarch – Milkweeds (*Asclepias incarnata*, *A. tuberosa*)
- Mourning Cloak – Black willow (*Salix nigra*)
- Northern Pearly-Eye – Wild oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)
- Pearl Crescent – White wood aster (*Aster divaricatus*)
- Questionmark – American Elm (*Ulmus americana*)
- Red Admiral – Wood nettle (*Laportea canadensis*)
- False nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*)
- Red Spotted Purple – Wild cherry (*Prunus serotina*)
- Silver Spotted Skipper – Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)
- Spicebush Swallowtail – Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)
- Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)
- Tiger Swallowtail – Tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)
- Viceroy – Black willow (*Salix nigra*)
- Zebra Swallowtail – Paw paw (*Asimina triloba*)

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