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Monarchs & Other Butterflies

VERY IMPORTANT: Butterflies are insects and insecticides will kill them. Don't use pesticides if you want butterflies! And don't buy plants treated with systemic pesticides such as neonicotinoids (Ex. Safari). They permeate the plant, don't wash off, and their toxicity persists even in the soil.

Native nectar plants

Include plants (species, **not cultivars**) that bloom in spring **and** summer **and** fall for the adult butterflies. Plant **large** patches. And plant **lots** of patches.

NOTE: Buddleia (aka butterfly bush) is NOT recommended! It's not native and can be invasive.

Some SPRING nectar sources:

Wild plums / wild cherries (*Prunus* spp.)
Blue flag iris (*Iris versicolor*)
Wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)
Violets (*Viola* spp.)

Some SUMMER nectar sources:

Milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.)
Coneflowers (*Echinacea* spp.)
Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), bergamot (*M. fistulosa*)
New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*)
Sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)
Coreopsis/Tickseed (*Coreopsis* spp.)
Sunflowers (*Helianthus* spp.)
Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

Some FALL nectar sources:

Joe-pye weed, boneset, snakeroot (*Eupatorium* spp.)
Gayfeather, blazing star (*Liatris* spp.)
Goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.) They do NOT cause allergies!
New England, New York asters (*Aster* spp.)
Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia* spp.)
New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*)

Other foods for some butterflies

- * Sap from wounded trees
- * Rotting fruit
- * Even urine, dung, bird droppings for some butterflies

Overwintering sites

Depending on the species, butterflies overwinter as eggs, caterpillars, chrysalises, or as adult butterflies, so

leave some logs, leaf litter, debris etc. around your yard so they have a place to stay. **Don't be a landscaping neat-nik and don't clean up too soon in spring!** (And they do NOT need -- nor use -- "butterfly houses"!)

Host plants for butterflies and moths

A *host plant* is the food for the butterfly's **caterpillar** stage. No host plant, no caterpillars; no caterpillars, no butterflies!

Milkweeds for monarch caterpillars

Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*): medium to wet soil; sun to part shade; 2-4 ft; doesn't spread

Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*): wet to dry; sun to part sun; 2-4 ft; pink, fragrant; will spread

Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*): medium to dry well-drained soil; sun to part sun; 1-3 ft; orange

Host plants for some other species

Pipevine swallowtail - pipevine

Black swallowtail - zizia, dill, parsley, carrot, fennel

Giant swallowtail - prickly ash, common rue

Spicebush swallowtail - spicebush, sassafras, tulip tree

Tiger swallowtail - wild black cherry, tulip tree

Clouded sulphur - clovers, alfalfa, black locusts

Cloudless sulphur - sennas, clovers, legumes

Brown elfin - blueberries, bearberries

Banded hairstreak - oaks, hickories, butternut

Gray hairstreak - mallows

Eastern tailed blue - clovers, legumes, baptisia

Spring azure - dogwood, NJ tea, wild cherry

Hackberry, Tawny emperor - hackberry tree

Mourning cloak - willow, elm, poplar, birch, hackberry

Comma - hops, nettles, elms

Question mark - nettles, hops, hackberry, elm

Am. Lady - pussytoes, pearly everlasting, ironweed

Fritillaries (Meadow, Great spangled) - violets

Baltimore checkerspot - white turtlehead, penstemon

Crescents (Northern, Pearl) - asters

White admiral - birches, aspen, poplars

Red admiral - nettles

Silver-spotted skipper - black locust, woody legumes

Dreamy Duskywing - willows, poplar, aspen, birch

Nessus sphinx moth - grapes

Hummingbird moth - honeysuckle, hawthorn, *Prunus*

Polyphemus moth - oaks willow, maple, birch

Cecropia moth - sugar maple, cherries, plums, dogwood

Luna moth - white birch, hickories, walnuts, sumacs

Resources

Xerces Society Gardening for Butterflies - Excellent!

Rea, Ba et.al. *Milkweed, Monarchs and More*

Monarch Watch: monarchwatch.org/

Journey North: journeynorth.org/

Monarch Joint Venture: monarchjointventure.org/

Wild Ones: wildones.org/wild-for-monarchs/