

# To attract butterflies use food, water, salt

**Q**uestion: I would like to attract more butterflies to my garden. Do you have any tips for that?

I have several reasons for wanting to establish a butterfly habitat in my yard. First, and most obvious, is their grace and beauty. How relaxing is it to watch a butterfly in flight flit from flower to bush? Secondly, I like to know that the work I do in my garden provides benefits for more than just me. The third, and probably the most important reason, is that the butterflies' natural habitat is being destroyed due to increasing construction and the use of pesticides.

**Answer:** It is very simple to attract these beautiful, beneficial insects to your yard. If given the proper habitat, you will be able to enjoy a bounty of butterflies for as long as you like. The following will provide you with enough information to get you started on your own butterfly garden.

You will need a place with five to six hours of



sun per day and little or no wind. If the area you choose is a little windy, you can remedy that by planting plants that will block the wind or by putting up other forms of windscreens. Woven willow is beautiful and effective.

You will need water and salt. It is said that butterflies can get all their nutrients and minerals from a mud puddle in the sun. However, if you prefer a more exact method, I suggest putting a small amount of sea salt (regular is okay but sea salt is better) with a slow drip of water over it. As

butterflies can dehydrate very quickly, water is extremely important. In extremely dry areas it is sometimes more important than even nectar.

Plants that support caterpillars and butterflies. These will be the major food source. A caterpillar needs plants it can chew on and butterflies, who get food by lapping, need plants that supply nectar. Select a variety of plants making sure that they bloom at different times so that they have nectar all through the summer. For an additional food source, you may want to mash a small amount of



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PIXABAY

fruit and set that out.

In selecting plants for your butterfly garden, try to select plants native or compatible to the area. Wise choices will prevent a foreign plant that is invasive from choking out native plants and endangering local habitats.

The following is a very short list with just some common examples of native and non-native (but compatible plants). Further research on the internet will give you additional information. Annuals- Clarkia, Pot Marigold, Bachelor Buttons, Cosmos, Sweet William, Zinnia and Verbena.

Perennials-Aster, Yarrow, Sea Pink Thrift, Butterfly Weed, Borage, Black-eyed

Susan, Lupine, Bleeding Heart. Shrubs-Lilac, Mock Orange, Honeysuckle, Flowering Currant, Spirea.

---

*Do you have a gardening question? Please e-mail, call, or visit the Douglas County Master Gardeners Plant Clinic at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu), 541-236-3052, or 1134 S.E. Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.*