Enhance Your Backyard Garden Pond with Butterflies

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

landscaping tips to ATTRACT BUTTERFLIES

Butterfly watching, for many, is a favorite outdoor pleasure, ranked right alongside watching birds and identifying wildflowers. Their eye-catching coloration is a benefit to any landscape, earning their designation as jewels of the sky. But aside from their sheer beauty, attracting butterflies to your yard has many natural benefits.

Beneficial Backyard Guests

Butterflies assist Mother Nature by pollinating flowers and fruit trees. Butterflies also provide food for larger predators without the undesired side effect of biting, stinging, or transmitting disease, which makes them highly-desired residents in our neighborhoods. It is believed that butterflies can also reveal the ecological health of a community. With their extreme sensitivity to any sort of toxin, their presence is a thumbs-up indication of the overall health of an ecosystem. A contaminated community cannot host a diverse or abundant selection of butterflies.

Butterflies have a unique, four-stage life cycle. Their metamorphosis begins when a fertilized egg hatches into a small caterpillar. Caterpillars munch continually on food and grow larger seemingly by the hour. The caterpillar then molts into an inactive chrysalis stage, where it appears mummy-like. It is inside this waxy pupal case that the magical transformation into adulthood takes place. When the chrysalis opens, a wrinkled-winged butterfly emerges. After it finds a mate, the whole miraculous cycle begins again.

After you've created the perfect butterfly haven, make sure to take the time and enjoy them. Have your camera ready, for they are fairly easy to photograph. Just keep in mind a couple of tips: avoid approaching them too quickly, and position yourself so you won't cast a shadow on them.

Attracting Butterflies

WE RECOMMEND

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Attracting Butterflies

There are many practical ways to attract butterflies to your yard. First, plant nectar-producing flowers. They prefer plants with a multitude of tiny blossoms clustered together, such as Butterfly Bush, Pentas, and Lantana. Butterflies also appreciate Shasta Daisies, Cosmos, and other daisy-like blooms. It's good to plant species of various heights. Also, make sure you have flowers blooming during various stages of the season, to have the longest overall blooming season possible. Aside from flowers, you may have success attracting adult butterflies with a nectar-filled butterfly feeder. Also, the larval (or caterpillar) stage of development requires plenty of host plants, such as milkweed and other leafy plants to chew. The more you provide, the better your chances of seeing butterflies later on.

Butterflies won't drink from deep rain barrels or ponds. They are often found lapping water in moist gravel along roads after rains. In the absence of rain, you can attract them by filling shallow pans with sand and top off with water. Or place stones on one side of a birdbath, layering them up to the surface.

Since butterflies love to stay warm on rocks, it is a good idea to place garden stones or decorative rocks in your flower beds. These stones will retain heat, warming visiting butterflies even as the sun goes down.

If you have open, windy areas that border your flower gardens, you will need to create wind breaks with rows of flowering trees, shrubs, or evergreens. Otherwise, your property may be too windy for visiting butterflies. However, make sure the wind breaks aren't shading your flowering areas, as butterflies prefer full sun. A butterfly house can be a welcomed refuge for visiting butterflies.

Add a standing Fountain or birdbath with decorative stones in your garden for butterflies to drink from.

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