



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Rockland County

10 Patriot Hills Drive
Stony Point, NY 10980
Phone: (845) 429 - 7085
Fax: (845) 429 - 8667
www.rocklandcce.org

Gardening to Attract Butterflies

A butterfly garden can be a great source of delight when it attracts these beautiful visitors, and the plantings may help conserve native butterfly species. Nectar and food plant sources within expanding urban areas can contribute to the prosperity of our local butterflies.

Planning Your Garden

A suitable site for butterflies has three basic requirements: full sun, shelter from wind, heavy rain or other adverse weather conditions, and a source of water. If you want butterflies to live in your garden, you will need to supply plants that serve as food for immature butterflies (caterpillars), as well those that provide nectar and pollen for adults.

Encourage Caterpillars

Because caterpillars consume plants, you must be willing to accept some damage to ornamental plant hosts. Do not use any insecticides in your butterfly garden. In addition to harming the caterpillars, many insecticides will also hurt adult butterflies. Consider siting the caterpillars' food plants in a less visible spot of the yard. Place flowers that provide nectar and pollen for adult butterflies in a more prominent location.

Help Butterflies Feel at Home

The best nectar flowers are fragrant, have a long season of bloom, and provide a sequence of bloom throughout the season. You may achieve this by mixing native and exotic plants. Clumped or massed plantings are most effective in attracting butterflies. Simplicity is the key to a satisfying and easily maintained butterfly garden.

Flowers that are flat-topped or clustered provide landing platforms and easy access to nectar. Blossoms with short nectar tubes may be used by a wide range of butterflies. Blue, purple, white, pink, yellow, orange, and red flowers may entice butterflies to your yard. Whether your garden is large or small, a number of attractive choices are available. For details, consult the following lists of butterflies common to Rockland County and plants that appeal to them:

Favorite Butterfly Plants

Perennials

Bee Balm – *Monarda didyma*

Black Eyed Susan - *Rudbeckia* spp.

Butterfly Bush – *Buddleia davidii*

Cardinal Flower – *Lobelia cardinalis*

Joe Pye Weed – *Eupatorium purpureum*

Milkweed – *Asclepias* spp.

New England Aster – *Aster novae-angliae*

New York Ironweed – *Vernonia noveboracensis*

Phlox – *Phlox* spp. Goldenrod – *Solidago* spp.

Purple Coneflower – *Echinacea purpurea*

Sedum – *Sedum* spp.

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Annuals and Tender Perennials

Aster – *Aster* spp.
 Cosmos – *Cosmos* spp.
 Dahlia – *Dahlia* spp.
 Geranium – *Pelargonium* spp.
 Heliotrope – *Heliotropium* spp.
 Impatiens – *Impatiens* spp.
 Lantana – *Lantana* spp.
 Marigold – *Tagetes* spp.
 Mexican Sunflower – *Tithonia rotundifolia*
 Pentas – *Pentas lanceolata*

Pinks, Sweet William – *Dianthus* sp.
 Petunia – *Petunia* spp. hybrids
 Salvia – *Salvia* spp.
 Snapdragon – *Antirrhinum majus*
 Statice – *Phylliostachys* spp.
 Strawflower – *Bracteantha bracteata*
 Sunflower – *Helianthus annuum*
 Tropical Hibiscus – *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*
 Verbena – *Verbena* spp.
 Zinnia – *Zinnia* spp.

Some Rockland County Butterflies

Butterfly	Season	Larval Host Plants	Adult Nectar Plants
American Painted Lady	mid April- October	Borage, Everlastings (Pearly Everlasting), Hollyhock, Wormwood	Aster, Bee Balm, Butterfly Bush, Iberis, Marigold, Mint, Sedum
Black Swallowtail	April- September	Carrot, Dill, Parsley, Queen Anne's Lace, Rue, Wild Parsnip	Butterfly Weed, Clover, Phlox, Thistle
Cabbage White	late March-hard frost	Cabbage, Broccoli, Mustard	Arabis (Rock Cress), Aster, Bee Balm, Dandelion, Mint, Marigold, Mustard
Clouded Sulphur	April- November	Clover	Aster, Clover, Dandelion, Goldenrod, Marigold, Milkweed, Phlox, Tithonia, Zinnia
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	April- September	Ash, Lilac, Tulip Tree, Sweet Bay, Wild Black Cherry, Willow	Bee Balm, Butterfly Bush, Dandelion, Lilac, Milkweed, Phlox
Great SpangledFrittilary	mid June- September	Violet	Bee Balm, Butterfly Bush, Butterfly Weed, Catmint, Coneflower, Mountain Laurel, Verbena
Monarch	Late May- November	Milkweed	Butterfly Bush, Cosmos, Goldenrod, Joe-Pye Weed, Liatris, Milkweed, Sedum, Tithonia, Zinnia
Mourning Cloak	March-fall	Cottonwood, Elm, Hackberry, Poplar, Willow	Arabis, Butterfly Bush, Butterfly Weed, Plant Sap, Willow
Red Admiral	mid April- October	Hops, Nettle	Aster, Butterfly Bush, Catmint, Iberis, Milkweed, Phlox, Plant Sap
Silver Spotted Skipper	May- September	Black Locust, Wisteria (legumes)	Dogbane, Globe Thistle, Joe-Pye Weed, Liatris, Milkweed, Pentas, Purple Cone Flower, Zinnia
Spicebush Swallowtail	April- September	Sassafrass, Spicebush, Sweet Bay, Tulip Tree,	Azalea, Butterfly Weed, Clover, Joe Pye Weed, Milkweed

Complete the Habitat

Butterflies must bask to regulate their body temperature. Provide flat stones throughout the garden where they can rest and absorb sun and heat. Many gardeners also provide a container of wet sand or a muddy puddle where butterflies may obtain salts and mineral-rich liquids.

Resources:

Carolyn Klass, Senior Extension Associate, Department of Entomology, Cornell University and Robert Dirig, Assistant Curator, Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium Herbarium, Cornell University.
Trish Schroer, Master Gardener, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rockland County.

Neither Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell University nor any representative thereof makes any representation of any warranty, express or implied, of any particular result or application of the information contained herein or regarding any product. It is the sole responsibility of the user to read and follow all product labeling instructions and to check with the manufacturer or supplier for the most recent information. Nothing contained in this information should be interpreted as an express or implied endorsement of any particular products or criticism of unnamed products.

The information on pest management for New York State contained in this publication is dated April 2007. The user is responsible for obtaining the most up-to-date pest management information. Contact any Cornell Cooperative Extension county office or PMEP (<http://pmep.cce.cornell.edu/>), the Cornell Cooperative Extension pesticide information website. The information herein is no substitute for pesticide labeling. The user is solely responsible for reading and following manufacturer's labeling and instructions.