



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Attracting Butterflies

## *Backyard Habitat for Wildlife*



### Creating Habitat

Creating habitat for butterflies is an exciting and rewarding endeavor. Some key components of your butterfly habitat are:

- **Sunny areas.** Plants that butterflies like require bright sunshine.
- **Splashes of color.** Butterflies are attracted to flowers by color. Groups of flowers are easier to locate than isolated plants.
- **Single flowers.** The nectar of single flowers is more accessible and easier to extract than double flowering plants.
- **Host plants.** Female butterflies lay their eggs only on certain host plants that will nourish the young caterpillars after they hatch. Grow those plants that supply food for the caterpillars.
- **Damp areas.** Butterflies cannot drink from open water. Wet sand, earth, or mud are the best watering holes.
- **Basking stones.** Butterflies often perch on stones to bask in the sun. Basking raises their body temperature so that they are able to fly and remain active.

### Enjoy Watching Butterflies

You can enhance your butterfly habitat by making personal observations. Identify which butterflies occur in your community and the plants they are visiting. Butterflies are easy to identify with field guides such as:

#### *Butterflies and Moths*

by H.S. Zim, Golden Guide Series, Golden Press, New York, New York, 1987.

*The Audubon Society Handbook for Butterfly Watchers* by R. M. Pyle, Charles Scribners & Sons.

### Host Plants for Butterflies

(Host plant—*Scientific name*  
Butterfly attracted)

**Butterflyweed**—*Asclepius tuberosa*  
Monarch Butterfly

**Parsley**—*Petroselinium crispum*  
Black Swallowtail Butterfly

**Dill**—*Anethum graveolens*  
Black Swallowtail Butterfly

**Fennel**—*Foeniculum vulgare*  
Black Swallowtail Butterfly

**Rue**—*Ruta graveolens*  
Black Swallowtail Butterfly

**Passion Flower**—*Passiflora incarnata*  
Gulf Fritillary Butterfly

**Spicebush**—*Lindera benzoin*  
Spicebush Swallowtail Butterfly

**Tulip Tree**—*Liriodendron tulipifera*  
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly

### Butterfly Biology

The most successful butterfly habitat includes plants which meet the needs of butterflies during all four stages of their life cycle: egg, caterpillar, chrysalis and adult.

After mating, female butterflies search for a specific kind of “host plant” on which to lay eggs. For example, monarchs lay eggs on milkweed, black swallowtails on parsley, and tiger swallowtails on tulip tree or wild cherry. In a few days, caterpillars emerge from the eggs and begin to eat. Caterpillars only feed on specific kinds of plants.

When the caterpillars are fully grown, they shed their skin and change into chrysalises. Often chrysalises are attached to plant stems and protected by surrounding vegetation. It is inside the chrysalis that the adult butterfly is formed.

After emerging from the chrysalis, the adult butterfly soon begins to search for nectar-rich flowers to feed upon.

### Plants Butterflies Like <sup>1</sup>

Plants selected from the following list will appeal to butterflies (common name *scientific name*):

#### Shrubs:

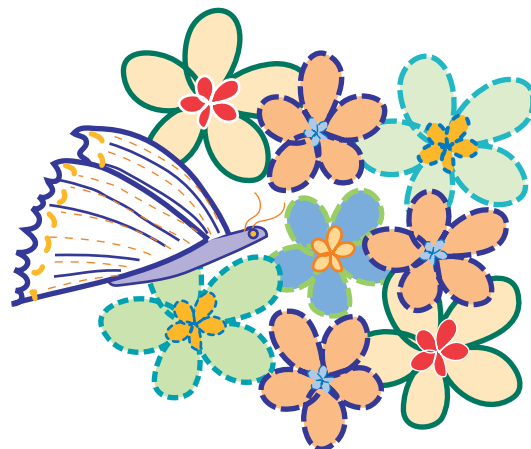
**Azalea**—*Rhododendron spp.*

#### Annuals:

**Cosmos**—*Cosmos sulphureus*

**French Marigold**—*Tagetes patula*

**Heliotrope**—*Heliotrope arborescens*



**Impatiens**—*Impatiens w allerana*

**Mexican sunflower**—*Tithonia rotundifolia*

**Verbena**—*Verbena x hybrida*

**Zinnia**—*Zinnia elegans*

**Pentas**—*Pentas lanceolata*

#### Perennials:

**Purple coneflower**—*Echinacea purpurea*

**Black-eyed susan**—*Rudbeckia spp.*

**Butterflyweed**—*Asclepias tuberosa*

**Coreopsis**—*Coreopsis spp.*

**Moss Verbena**—*Verbena tenuisecta*

<sup>1</sup> Information provided by  
The Butterfly Center, Callaway Gardens