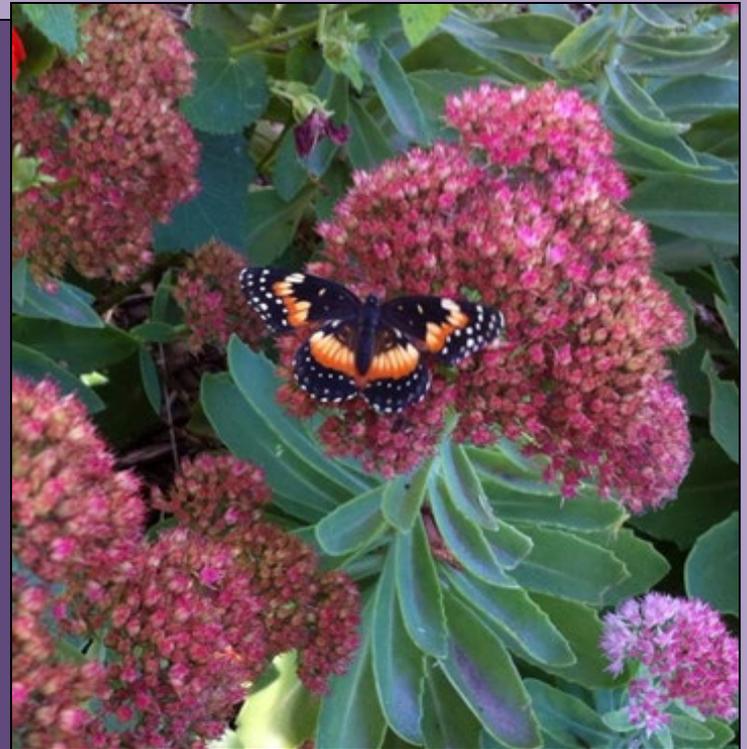# Butterfly Gardening

in the Big Country

Sulfurs, queen, and painted lady enjoy lavender

The Keys to Success!

- Go native
- Host Plants
- Nectar plants
- Friendly Environment

Border Patch on Sedum

Why Natives?

- Most butterflies have a close relationship to the plants they have developed with for millennia.

- Some imported plants can be harmful to native butterflies.

- Native plants can also handle our delightful Texas climate and pests .

Monarch caterpillar enjoying some milkweed

Don't start from scratch.

- Add some natives to your existing garden.
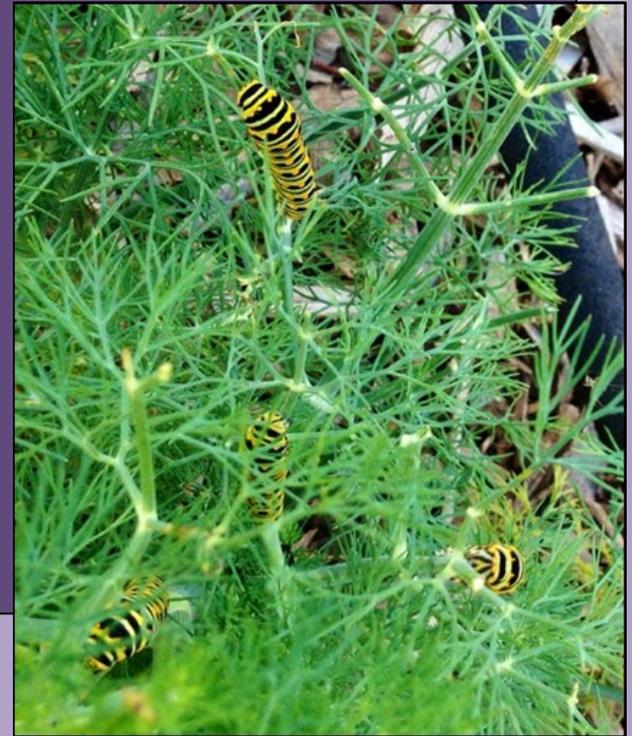- As you replace plants, go with native species.

Crescents on blackfoot daisy

Host Plants

- You can't have butterflies without caterpillars.

- Host plants attract butterflies to your garden and keep them coming back.

- Watching butterflies leaving their chrysalis can be lots of fun.

Swallowtail caterpillars on dill

Top Host Plants

1. **Fennell, dill, parsley, rue**: black and tiger swallowtails

2. **Milkweed**: monarchs, queens.

3. **Passion vine**: fritillaries

4. **Hollyhocks and asters**: painted lady

5. **Ruellia, acanthus, snapdragon, frogfruit**: buckeyes

6. **Sunflowers**: bordered patch, checker spot, and dainty sulphur

Swallowtail on verbena

Trees are Host Plants, too.

- **Oak** : various dusky wings and hairstreaks
- **Willow**: viceroy, western tiger swallowtail, mourning cloak, red-spotted purple
- **Hackberry**: question mark, hackberry and tawny emperor
- **Honey Mesquite**: ceraunus, Reakirt's, and marine blues

Question mark butterfly

For an extensive list of host plants and the butterflies who love to eat them, check: dallasbutterflies.com

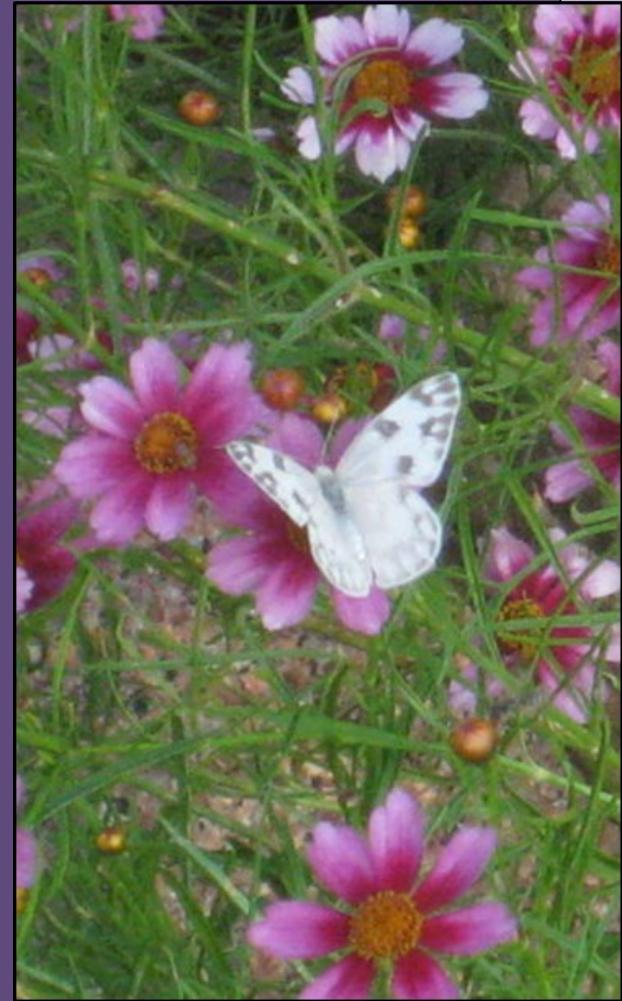Emperor on horsemint

Fritillary on pentas

Nectar Plants

- Butterflies like flowers that have a surface they can land on.

- Compound or composite flowers like sunflowers and daisies provide butterflies with more bang for their buck.

The center of a composite flower is actually made up of lots of little flowers

- They say butterflies prefer purple, pink, yellow, and white. Though I've seen them on every color.

- Plant in groups so you get big clumps of color.

- They are actually attracted more to smell than color.

Checkered white on coreopsis

- Shoot for as long a bloom period as possible.
- Watch which plants seem to have butterflies on them in each season.
- Host plants are often good nectar plants, too.

Summer

Spring

Fall

Perennials

- Lantana
- Greg's Mistflower
- Yarrow
- Coreopsis
- Blackfoot daisy
- Scabiosa
- Coneflowers
- Mealy cup sage
- Lavender
- Hollyhock
- Liatris

Juniper hairstreak on Gregg's mistflower

Red admiral on coreopsis

Annuals

- Zinnias
- Pentas
- Milkweed
- Golden
      Dewdrop
- Cosmos
- Sunflower
- Petunias

Swallowtail on pentas

Monarch on golden dewdrop

Dogface butterflies on zinnias

Trees

- Desert willow
- Mountain Laurel
- Yaupon holly
- Vitex
- Texas sage

Shrubs

- Butterfly bush
- Turk's cap
- Glossy abelia
- Salvia gregii
- Agarita

A Friendly Environment

It's important to make our gardens both inviting and a safe place for butterflies.

Monarch and queens enjoying one of their favorites, mystic spires salvia

Nix the Pesticides

- They kill <u>all</u> insects, even the organics

- Systemics are particularly bad for caterpillars.

- If you absolutely have to use them, do so sparingly and with care.

- I put up with a lot of aphids and some chewed up leaves. Its worth it.

The Issue with Ants

- Fire ants are a real menace to caterpillars.

- I've been told that any thing that will kill ants will kill caterpillars, but caterpillars shouldn't eat ant bait.

- So you weigh the risk. Which is more dangerous to your butterfly caterpillars?

Other Things to Include:

- Ornamental grasses provide cover for small butterflies.

- Leaves on the ground in the fall will provide cover for those that winter over. LEAVE the LEAVES!

- Try to avoid watering with an overhead sprinkler, it dilutes nectar.

- A "puddling" area, with a dish of damp sand or area of moist dirt, provides butterflies with important minerals.

- Flat rocks or logs for sunning are appreciated.

- Place puddling area and sunning rocks near open areas.

Gray hairstreak on four nerve daisy

Butterfly Feeder

- Not all butterflies drink nectar. Some like tree sap, rotten fruit, manure, even carrion.

- You can use things like over-ripe bananas and cantaloupe, to attract these butterflies.

Red admiral and question marks enjoy the feeder

Butterfly Brew

- Mash up bananas or peaches and mix with molasses or brown sugar.

- Add stale beer or yeast.

- Put it in a plastic bottle and seal, but not too tight.

- Put a chunk of bark in a shallow dish and drizzle on some brew. Or you can paint it on fence posts and trees.

Mourning cloaks like tree sap and fruit

Helpful Websites

www.butterfliesandmoths.org – my go to website. Lots of great information.

www.butterfliesathome.com – special page on Texas butterflies. Includes suggested books and links to butterfly and nature centers in the state.

www.dallasbutterflies.com – list of host plants. Also list of native nurseries in the Metroplex.

Horace's dusky wing on rock

Conservation Sites

www.xerces.org – insect conservation; especially pollinators. Good info. on monarchs.

www.monarchwatch.org – the site for monarch conservation. Information on milkweeds and milkweed sources. Also how to set up your garden as a Monarch Waystation.

Monarch on Greg's mistflower

National Butterfly Center

The National Butterfly Center in Mission, Texas has a butterfly garden certification program.

If your garden meets the criteria,

for a fee, you can have your garden officially certified.

They also have a butterfly festival every year.

www.nationalbutterflycenter.org

Hope you enjoyed the program!