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PLANT A GARDEN . . . *grow* BUTTERFLIES

BUTTERFLIES ARE SIMPLE TO ATTRACT, BEAUTIFUL TO OBSERVE, AND THEY UNDERGO A LIFE CYCLE THAT WILL FASCINATE YOU. BUTTERFLY GARDENING IS A WONDERFUL WAY TO EXPLORE THE NATURAL WORLD AROUND US AND APPRECIATE THE VAST BEAUTY OF NATURE THAT EXISTS RIGHT IN OUR OWN BACKYARD. IN FACT, ACCORDING TO THE NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, WILDLIFE WATCHING AS A WHOLE HAS BECOME ONE OF THIS COUNTRY'S FASTEST-GROWING OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES!

NOW . . . SIT BACK, RELAX, AND ENJOY THE JEWELS IN FLIGHT!

host plants

All butterflies begin as a tiny egg laid on a specific plant called a host plant. The baby butterfly that hatches out of the egg is really a caterpillar with a voracious appetite for this specific plant. Provide the host plants for whatever butterfly you want to attract. For example, Monarchs require Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) or Swamp Milk Weed (*Asclepias incarnata*) as a host plant. Spicebush Swallowtails would appreciate the aptly named Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*). To attract the Eastern Black Swallowtail, add some celery, dill, fennel, or parsley to your herb garden. A complete listing of host plants can be found on the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Website (ces.ncsu.edu). Remember, baby butterflies will eat the host plant—meaning they will eat your garden—this is what nature intended! Don't be tempted to remove them or they will starve. Don't fret, though—most plants will tolerate the loss of foliage just fine and continue to grow.

nectar plants

With all that fluttering about and laying of eggs, adult butterflies need a constant energy source (i.e., nectar in the form of flowering plants). Butterflies see more colors than humans and are attracted to bright colors such as red, orange, yellow, bright purple, and hot pink. Plant a wide variety of native flowers such as Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*), Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), Black Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Summer Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*), Tickseed (*Coreopsis verticillata*), and Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*). Again, a complete listing of nectar plants can be found on the aforementioned website.

location, location, location

A sunny location is a must for two reasons: butterflies need to warm their bodies in order to fly, and most of their favorite flowering nectar plants grow in full sun. Provide a flat rock or two in the garden where they can rest and warm up. Choose a spot that is protected from strong winds, as many butterflies will avoid areas where they are rudely blown about. Provide a source of water in the form of a shallow, sand-filled "puddling" area, where male butterflies will congregate to ingest water and salts needed for reproduction. Last, avoid chemical pesticides! You may be trying to kill aphids, but you will also kill adult butterflies, baby caterpillars, and beneficial insects such as ladybugs, thus defeating the very purpose of your butterfly garden. 🦋