

# How to Attract Butterflies to Your Garden

Attracting butterflies to your garden or property is easy if you supply them with four things:

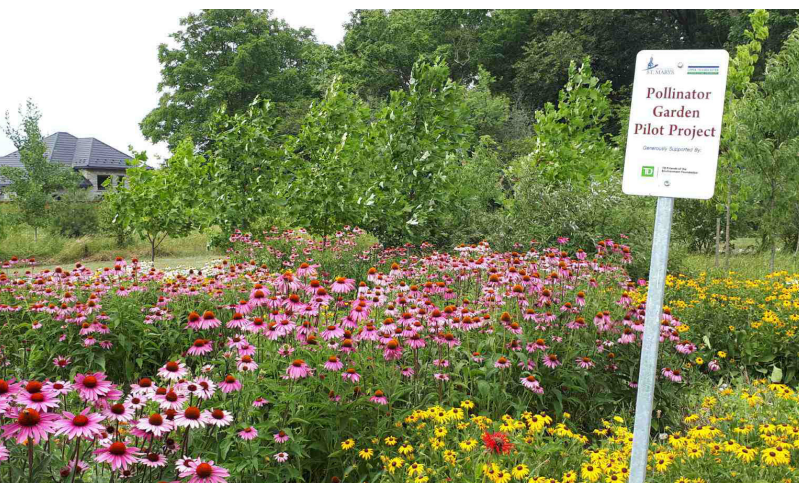
1. Food
2. Water
3. Habitat
4. Host plants

Since many butterfly species do not migrate, butterfly gardens can provide them with shelter and nourishment for their entire life cycle.

## WHERE TO BUILD YOUR GARDEN

When creating a butterfly garden:

- Choose a sunny location. Butterflies need to bask in the sun to warm themselves so they are able to fly.
- Choose an area that is protected from strong winds, such as next to shrubs or walls.
- Place a few rocks in sunny areas for butterflies to rest on and warm up.
- Add a wood pile where butterflies can overwinter in the various stages of their life cycle (i.e., egg, cocoon, caterpillar, or adult).



## FLOWERS AS FOOD FOR ADULT BUTTERFLIES

Sweet nectar from bright, fragrant flowers is the main source of food for adult butterflies, giving them energy to fly and find a mate.

Butterflies favour tubular or flat topped flowers where they can land and access nectar with their long tongue or proboscis. Native plants are excellent choices, but horticultural flowers are also good nectar sources.

Plant a variety of flowers that bloom at different times of year to ensure that food is available throughout the seasons.

Butterflies are attracted to the sugar in rotting fruit and tree sap. Consider placing over-ripe fruit on a plate to draw in butterflies.



Viceroy on Blazing-star

## HOST PLANTS AS FOOD FOR BUTTERFLY LARVAE

Butterflies need special larval plants on which they lay their eggs. Once the eggs hatch, the caterpillars feed on the leaves of the host plant.

Each species of butterfly has its own preferred host plant which could be a tree, shrub, or herbaceous plant.

Host plants should be included in your garden to ensure butterflies stay throughout the year.



Black Swallowtail Caterpillar

## WATER AND MINERALS

Using their proboscis, butterflies draw up water from wet, sandy soils or mud puddles. These water sources also supply additional minerals and salts that help butterflies with reproduction.

To help butterflies obtain water and minerals:

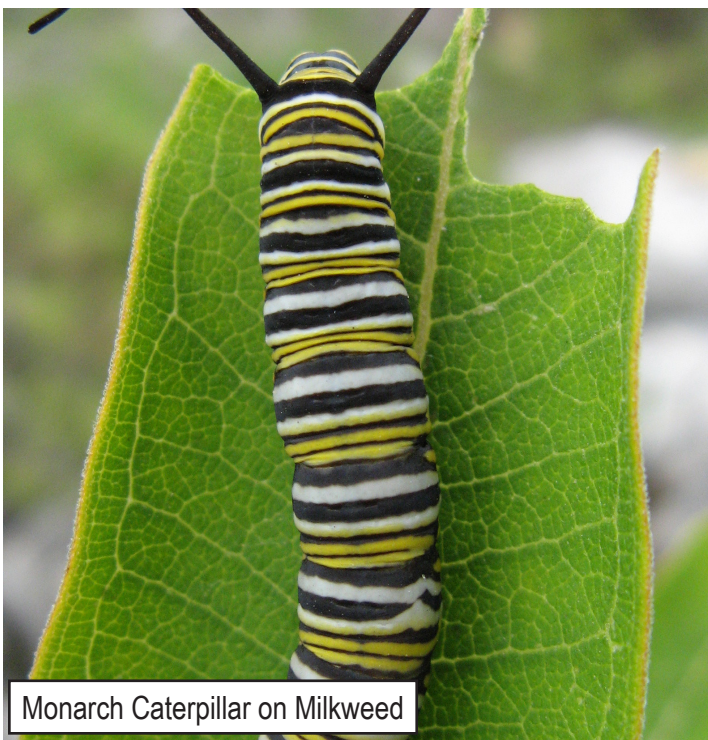
1. Create mud puddles by placing sand on a large plate or plant saucer, and adding water.
2. Change or refresh the water regularly to prevent it from becoming stagnant.
3. Add some salt to the sand.



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail on Wet Sand

## AVOID PESTICIDES

Butterflies are very sensitive to pesticides, especially at the caterpillar stage. Avoid using them in and around your butterfly garden.



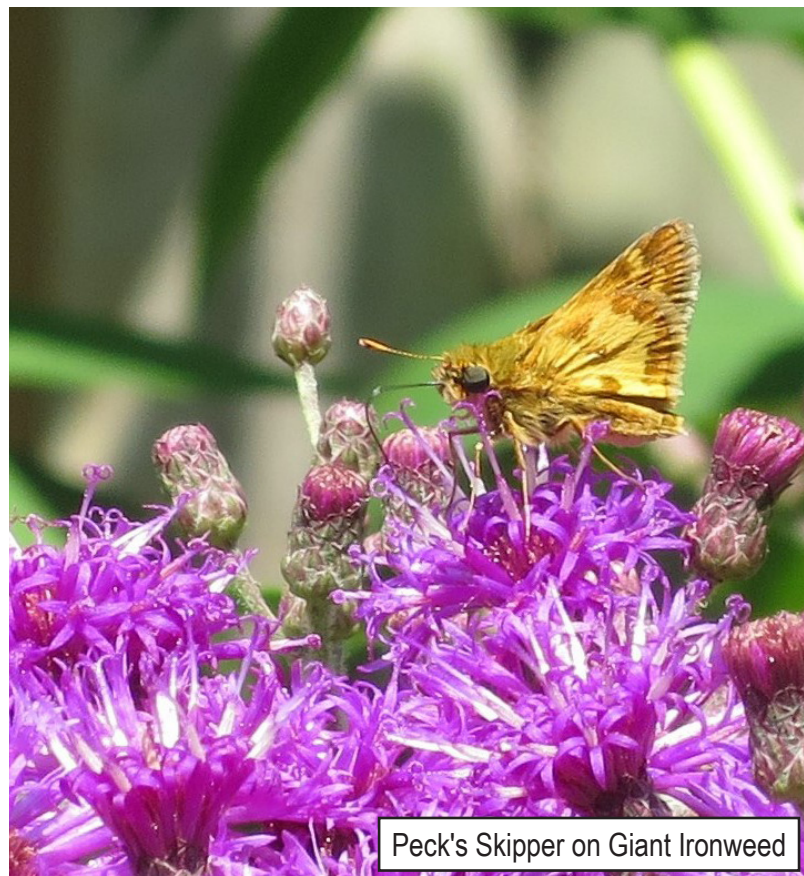
Monarch Caterpillar on Milkweed

## HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

- [gardenontario.org/wp-content/uploads/roadsidesguide.pdf](https://gardenontario.org/wp-content/uploads/roadsidesguide.pdf)
- [davidsuzuki.org/living-green/how-to-create-a-butterfly-garden](https://davidsuzuki.org/living-green/how-to-create-a-butterfly-garden)
- [pollinatorpathwaysproject.com](https://pollinatorpathwaysproject.com)
- [carolinacanada.ca](https://carolinacanada.ca)

## FIND LISTS OF RECOMMENDED PLANTS AT [THAMESRIVER.ON.CA/WATERSHED-HEALTH](https://thamesriver.on.ca/watershed-health)

- Butterfly larvae host food plants
- Native wildflowers and grasses
- Tallgrass prairie plants
- Nurseries that sell native plants
- Gardening with native plants
- Invasive non-native plants



Peck's Skipper on Giant Ironweed

**UPPER THAMES RIVER**  
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

[thamesriver.on.ca](https://thamesriver.on.ca)  
Upper Thames River Conservation Authority  
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# Native Plants with Nectar-Producing Flowers for Adult Butterflies



The following plant species are native to southwestern Ontario and known to attract adult butterflies.

**P** (Perennial); **Sh** (Shrub); **W** (Wet soil tolerant); **A** (Aggressive / Spreads Quickly).

Scientific Name	Common Name	P	Sh	W	A
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Common Yarrow	P			A
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	Swamp Milkweed	P		W	
<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	Common Milkweed	P			A
<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Butterfly Milkweed	P			
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Eastern Buttonbush		Sh	W	
<i>Chelone glabra</i>	White Turtlehead	P		W	
<i>Coreopsis tripteris</i>	Tall Tickseed	P			
<i>Cornus spp.</i>	Dogwood species		Sh		
<i>Echinacea pallida</i>	Pale Purple Coneflower	P			
<i>Eutrochium maculatum</i>	Spotted Joe Pye Weed	P		W	
<i>Helianthus divaricatus</i>	Woodland Sunflower	P			A
<i>Helianthus giganteus</i>	Giant Sunflower	P			
<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i>	False Sunflower (Sweet Oxeye)	P			A
<i>Liatris spicada</i>	Dense Blazing-star	P			
<i>Liatris cylindracea</i>	Slender Blazing-star	P			
<i>Lupinus perennis</i>	Sundial or Wild Lupine	P			
<i>Monarda didyma</i>	Scarlet Beebalm	P			
<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Wild Bergamot	P			A
<i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	Grey-headed Prairie Coneflower	P			A
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Brown-eyed Susan	P			A
<i>Silphium perfoliatum</i>	Cup Plant	P			A
<i>Solidago rigida</i>	Stiff Goldenrod (and all goldenrods)	P			A
<i>Spiraea alba</i>	Meadowsweet		Sh	W	
<i>Symphotricum laeve</i>	Smooth Aster (and all asters)	P			
<i>Verbena hastata</i>	Blue Vervain	P		W	
<i>Vernonia gigantea</i>	Giant Ironweed	P			A
<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>	Culver's Root	P			A
<i>Viburnum acerifolium</i>	Maple-leaved Viburnum (and all viburnums)		Sh		
<i>Zizia aurea</i>	Golden Alexanders	P		W	A

# Horticultural Plants with Nectar Producing Flowers for Adult Butterflies



The following horticultural plants are known to attract adult butterflies. Very invasive species are not included. If choosing between a single or double bloom variety of flower, choose single as the reproductive plant parts are more accessible to butterflies.

**P** (Perennial); **An** (Annual); **Bi** (Biennial); **Sh** (Shrub).

Scientific Name	Common Name	Form
<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>	Blue Giant Hyssop	P
<i>Ageratum spp.</i>	Floss Flower	An
<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>	Chives	P
<i>Alcea rosea</i>	Hollyhock (singles)	Bi
<i>Buddleia spp.</i>	Butterfly Bush species	Sh
<i>Calendula officinalis</i>	Potted Marigold (Pot Marigold)	An
<i>Centaurea montana</i>	Mountain Cornflower	P
<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>	Garden Cosmos	An
<i>Dahlia spp.</i>	Dahlia (singles)	Bulb
<i>Dianthus spp.</i>	Sweet Williams / Pinks	P
<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	Purple Coneflowers (and cultivars)	P
<i>Echinops spp.</i>	Globe-thistles	P
<i>Gaillardia x grandiflora</i>	Blanket Flower	P
<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Common Sunflower (and other sunflowers)	An
<i>Heliotropium arborescens</i>	Heliotrope	An
<i>Hylotelephium spectabile</i>	Autumn Joy Sedum (Stonecrop)	P
<i>Nicotiana spp.</i>	Flowering Tobacco	An
<i>Paeonia spp.</i>	Peony (singles)	P
<i>Petunia spp.</i>	Petunias	An
<i>Philadelphicus coronarius</i>	Sweet Mock Orange	Sh
<i>Phlox paniculata</i>	Garden Phlox	P
<i>Spiraea spp.</i>	Spireas	Sh
<i>Tagetes patula</i>	French Marigold	An
<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>	Nasturtium	An
<i>Weigela florida</i>	Old-fashioned Weigela	Sh
<i>Zinnia spp.</i>	Zinnias (singles)	An