

Butterfly Gardening

Hints & tips for attracting butterflies to the garden



Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust

Butterflies are some of Britain's most colourful wildlife. Much loved by children and adults, their high dependency on a limited number of plants makes them especially vulnerable in a changing landscape where habitats and food plants are being lost. This has unfortunately already led to the extinction of some species, whilst others are in decline.

However, if a variety of plants are grown in sunny, sheltered spots, your garden can offer these enigmatic creatures real hope.

It's not just nectar and pollen rich plants that are needed - butterflies can also be helped further and encouraged to stay longer if there are a few 'food plants' for their caterpillars.

To help you create a colourful border that's attractive to butterflies we have provided a few hints and tips and a list of suitable plants. Many of the plants will also be attractive to bees and other insects. These, in turn, will provide natural food for birds and bats, especially if a few night-scented plants are included for nocturnal moths.



Planning a Butterfly Border

Select a site

Choose a sunny, sheltered spot. Butterflies need the sun to warm them up and get them going and enjoy basking in the sun. They will not visit flowers in the shade.

Choose your plants

Pick some that flower in spring, summer and autumn to provide a continuous supply of nectar. Old-fashioned varieties tend to be more nectar-rich, whilst double flowers and new hybrids have very little.



Caterpillars

Include some food plants for the young; without these butterflies will continue to decline.

Hibernation

Thick vegetation will provide cover for butterflies that hibernate in winter.

Colour

Plant groups of the same species in threes or fives. This will give a strong visual sign to passing butterflies and better scent.

Nettles.

Many gardeners are keen to get rid of them but nettles in a sunny location will host the caterpillars of the peacock, red admiral, small tortoiseshell and comma butterflies. Bramble and ivy are also great for butterflies, birds and other wildlife.



Nectar-rich plants for Butterflies

Spring flowering

Alyssum
Cowslip
Forget-me-not
Polyanthus
Grape hyacinth
Honesty
Primrose

Summer flowering

Hyssop
Wallflower
Lavender
Lady's smock
Marigolds
Field scabious
Verbena
Thyme
Marjoram
Goldenrod
Buddleia

Autumn flowering

Lavender
Fuchsia
Ice plant
Russian sage
Michaelmas daisies
Ivy

Avoid using pesticides in the garden. They can kill caterpillars

Plants for breeding butterflies

Species

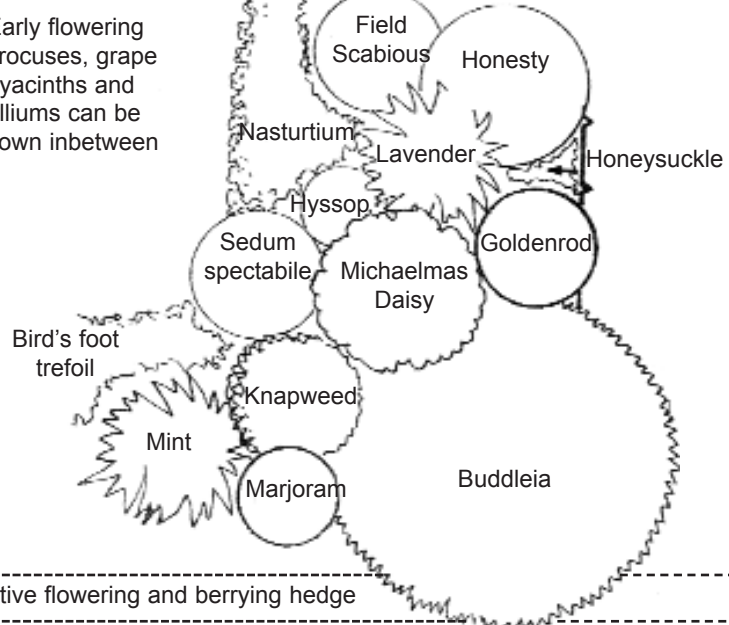
Peacock
Small tortoiseshell
Comma
Red admiral
Large skipper
Small skipper
Dingy skipper
Large white
Small white
Green-veined white
Orange tip
Small copper
Common blue
Painted lady
Wall
Meadow brown
Ringlet

Plants preferred

Common nettle
Common nettle
Common nettle
Common nettle
Cock's foot, false brome
Yorkshire fog
Common bird's-foot trefoil
Cabbage family, nasturtium, wild mignonette
Cabbage family, nasturtium, hedge mustard, garlic mustard
Cabbage family, cuckoo flower, charlock, nasturtium
Cuckoo flower, garlic mustard
Common sorrel, sheep's sorrel
Common bird's-foot trefoil
Thistles, common nettle
False brome, cock's foot, Yorkshire fog, wavy hair grass
Fescue species, meadow-grass, bents
Cock's foot, false brome, tufted hair-grass, common couch



Early flowering crocuses, grape hyacinths and alliums can be sown inbetween



A suggestion for a butterfly-friendly planting scheme

Nectar-rich wildflowers for butterflies

Lady's bedstraw	Knapweed
Betony	Lady's smock/Cuckoo flower
Bird's foot trefoil	Common mallow
Bluebell	Corn marigold
Bugle	Oxlip
Meadow buttercup	Purple loosestrife
Red campion	Ragged robin
Red clover	St John's wort
Wild primrose	Field scabious
Cowslip	Teasel
Ox-eye daisy	Thrift
Dog violet	Wild thyme
Feverfew	Common toadflax
Harebell	Viper's bugloss
Herb robert	Yarrow



Hibernation

White, browns & blues over-winter as chrysalis.

Painted lady & red admiral migrate to Europe.

Brimstone, peacock and small tortoiseshell hibernate in shrubs and buildings as adults.