



Planting a Native Plant Butterfly Garden

Butterfly gardeners show they care deeply about the environment and their connection to nature. While providing food and shelter for monarchs and other pollinators, they also help to conserve native plants, reduce habitat fragmentation and increase biodiversity in the landscapes. Healthy ecosystems directly affect the quality of our food, water and air—and what could be more important than that?

STEPS FOR SUCCESS

1 Preparation: Evaluate your site and choose a spot with at least six hours of sunlight. Simply add native plants to an existing garden or replace a patch of lawn. If replacing a lawn, start with a clean planting bed and remove non-native vegetation if necessary. Select plant species that match the light, soil, pH and moisture conditions of your garden plot. See: wildones.org/learn

2 Design Considerations: To be visually appealing, select native plant species of varied heights that bloom at different times. These will provide nectar for adult butterflies throughout the season. Don't forget to include native grasses such as little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) not only for contrast, but also to help keep the blooming forbs upright. Enhance your garden with least two types of milkweed for monarchs and additional host species for caterpillars of other butterfly species if you would like. For some species, enhance your garden by adding a butterfly puddling spot and small brush pile for over-wintering species like mourning cloak butterflies. Take a "before" photo of the site.

3 Plant Selection: Make a sketch of the planting plan and color-code bloom times for early, mid-season and late flowers. Fall-blossoming, nectar-rich plants are particularly important to migrating monarchs. Make a list of your plant species and check the number needed. Allow for sufficient room between plants as they mature, typically 12" on center. Mulch to provide a weed barrier. Find a reputable native plant nursery that carries plants and seeds from your area (local genotype) and uses best management practices appropriate

for sensitive ecosystems. If seeding, use a nurse crop of annual rye or oats to reduce weed growth.

4 Maintenance: At first, water regularly, remove weeds and keep mulched until the garden is established. Be pesticide free since this garden is wildlife food. Some butterfly gardeners cut back some stalks of summer milkweed (late June or early July) to force new leaves for monarch caterpillars—be sure to transfer any eggs or larvae to plants that you don't cut back. Later in the season (August-September), practice benign neglect! In the fall, leave some dead leaves and stalks to provide overwintering sites for pollinators. Update your garden plan. Take an "after" photo of your garden.

5 Register your Waystation through MonarchWatch.org or NABA.org. If your Waystation or butterfly garden is planted with at least 75% native species, please contact Wild Ones for additional recognition. See contact info in this brochure.

6 Monitor: Keep records of monarchs observed. [Monarch jointventure.org](http://MonarchJointventure.org) provides contacts for several monitoring programs. Each week or two, keep track of your observations, such as which plants are preferred by butterflies and other pollinators as host plants and nectar or pollen sources. Take photos of the garden throughout the season and share your favorites on the Wild Ones website. See instructions at right.

7 Share your seeds or divisions of plants to help start another butterfly garden! Invite others to visit your garden or Waystation to enjoy the beauty of the butterflies in the natural landscape you have created.

