

Butterfly Magnets



Aquilegia chrysantha

For many years, there has been a growing interest in gardening for butterflies, especially with the focus on providing habitat and food sources for Monarch butterflies, one of our most notable pollinators. There are many great resources out there to help you plan your garden for becoming a haven for butterflies. Two great resources we used to compile this list are the booklet “Desert Butterfly Gardening” published by the Arizona Native Plant Society and the Sonoran Arthropod Studies Institute, and [Native Gardens for Dry Climates](#) by Sally and Andy Wasowski. We also received some great observations and notes from Tucson horticulturalist Greg Starr. More great resources for butterfly attractors in your region can also be found at your local botanical gardens, such as the Desert Botanical Garden, Tucson Botanical Garden, and Tohono Chul Park here in Arizona. Local independent retail nurseries are also a great source of information on plants that will thrive in your climate.



Conoclinium dissectum Boothill™

One of the best plants for attracting butterflies in Southwestern gardens is *Conoclinium dissectum* Boothill™ (syn. *Eupatorium greggii*). In low desert areas, Boothill™ prefers some filtered shade, making it an ideal understory plant for mesquites and palo verdes. In higher elevations, this plant will perform well in full sun to partial shade, and is root hardy down to about 0 degrees or possibly colder. Each plant will grow to about 18 inches tall and 2 to 3 feet wide. From spring through fall, this plant produces fuzzy, lavender-blue flowers that butterflies seem to find irresistible. This perennial can freeze back to the ground in winter, but quickly recovers from underground stems once temperatures warm up. Try combining Boothill™ with one of the *Gaura lindheimeri* varieties to mix pinks and whites into your planting. These both have similar requirements, preferring some light shade and supplemental irrigation through the hot summer months.

To have success with butterfly gardening, you should provide both nectar sources for adults, and larval foodplants to provide for the caterpillars. Adult butterflies feed on the nectar of certain flowers while the caterpillars feed on specific plants known as ‘larval foodplants.’ Try to combine plants to provide a year-round source of nectar if possible. Eliminate the use of pesticides and other chemicals in your garden, as these can kill caterpillars and adult butterflies. You can expect butterflies to be most active during ideal conditions: sunny, calm days when the temperatures range from 65 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Butterflies seem to prefer the early mornings and evenings during the hot summer months.

On the following list we have included the plants that we grow that are butterfly friendly from our observations and those of other horticulturalists. There are notations for nectar plants (providing food for adults) and larval plants (providing food for caterpillars). Some plants provide both!

Plants for Butterfly Gardening

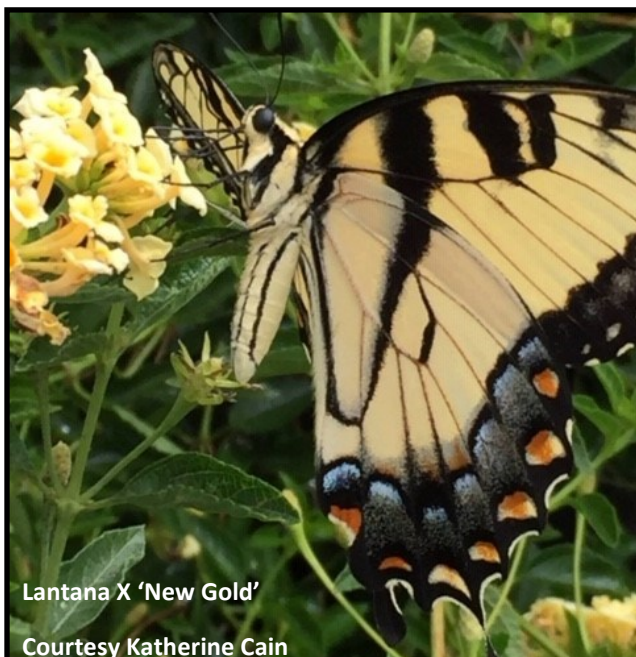
Botanical Name	Common Name	Plant Type	Food Source
Acacia greggii	Catclaw Acacia	Tree	Nectar
Aquilegia chrysantha	Golden Columbine	Perennial	Nectar
Asclepias subulata	Desert Milkweed	Accent	Nectar and Larval
Atriplex sp.	Saltbush	Shrub	Larval
Baccharis sarathroides	Desert Broom	Shrub	Nectar
Baccharis Thompson®	Dwarf Coyote Bush	Shrub	Nectar
Baileya multiradiata	Desert Marigold	Perennial	Nectar
Berlandiera lyrata	Chocolate Flower	Perennial	Nectar
Bouteloua curtipendula	Sideoats Grama	Grass	Larval
Buddleja marrubifolia	Butterfly Bush	Shrub	Nectar
Caesalpinia gilliesii	Yellow Bird of Paradise	Shrub	Nectar
Caesalpinia pulcherrima	Red Bird of Paradise	Shrub	Nectar
Caliandra eriophylla	Pink Fairy Duster	Shrub	Larval
Calliandra X Sierra Starr™	Sierra Starr™ Fairy Duster	Shrub	Larval
Caryopteris X clandonensis 'Dark Knight'	Blue Mist Shrub	Shrub	Nectar
Celtis pallida	Desert Hackberry	Shrub	Larval
Celtis reticulata	Netleaf Hackberry	Tree	Larval
Chilopsis linearis	Desert Willow	Tree	Nectar
Chrysactinia mexicana	Damianita Daisy	Shrub	Nectar
Conoclinium dissectum Boothill™	Boothill™	Perennial	Nectar
Cordia boissieri	Texas Olive	Tree/Shrub	Nectar
Cordia parvifolia	Little Leaf Cordia	Shrub	Nectar
Dalea bicolor v. bicolor Monterrey Blue™	Monterrey Blue™	Shrub	Nectar and Larval
Dalea capitata Sierra Gold®	Sierra Gold®	Groundcover	Nectar and Larval
Dalea frutescens Sierra Negra™	Black Dalea	Shrub	Nectar and Larval
Dalea greggii	Trailing Indigo Bush	Groundcover	Nectar and Larval
Dalea lutea Sierra Moonrise™	Sierra Moonrise™	Shrub	Nectar and Larval
Dalea pulchra	Indigo Bush	Shrub	Nectar and Larval
Encelia farinosa	Brittlebush	Shrub	Nectar and Larval
Ericameria laricifolia Aguirre™	Aguirre™ Turpentine Bush	Shrub	Nectar
Ericameria laricifolia 'Desert Mountain'	Turpentine Bush	Shrub	Nectar
Ericameria nauseosa v. speciosa	Rabbitbrush	Shrub	Nectar
Eriogonum fasciculatum v. poliofolium	Flattop Buckwheat	Perennial	Nectar



Caesalpinia pulcherrima

Courtesy Katherine Cain

Fallugia paradoxa	Apache Plume	Shrub	Nectar
Gaura lindheimeri	Wand Flower	Perennial	Nectar
Gaillardia X 'Arizona Sun'	Blanketflower	Perennial	Nectar
Glandularia sp.	Verbena	Perennial	Nectar
Havardia pallens Sierra Sparkler™	Sierra Sparkler™	Tree	Nectar
Hyptis emoryi	Desert Lavender	Shrub	Nectar
Lantana sp.	Lantana	Groundcover/Shrub	Nectar and Larval
Leucaena retusa	Golden Leadball Tree	Tree	Nectar
Leucophyllum sp.	Texas Ranger/ Texas Sage	Shrub	Nectar
Linum lewisii	Blue Flax	Perennial	Nectar
Lycium sp.	Wolfberry	Shrub	Nectar
Melempodium leucanthum	Blackfoot Daisy	Perennial	Nectar
Nepeta X faassenii 'Select Blue'	Select Blue Catmint	Perennial	Nectar
Oenothera sp.	Primrose	Perennial	Nectar
Pentsemon sp.	Penstemon	Perennial	Larval
Perovskia atriplicifolia 'Longin'	Russian Sage	Shrub	Nectar
Plumbago scandens 'Summer Snow'	White Plumbago	Shrub	Nectar
Prosopis juliflora	Velvet Mesquite	Tree	Nectar and Larval
Russelia equisetiformis	Coral Fountain	Shrub	Nectar
Salvia sp.	Sage	Shrub	Nectar
Senna sp.	Senna/Cassia	Shrub	Larval
Sphaeralcea ambigua	Globe Mallow	Perennial	Nectar and Larval
Thymophylla pentachaeta	Golden Dogbane	Perennial	Nectar
Verbena rigida	Sandpaper Verbena	Perennial	Nectar
Vitex agnus-castus 'Montrose Purple'	Monk's Pepper Tree	Tree	Nectar
Zinnia acerosa	Desert Zinnia	Perennial	Nectar
Zinnia grandiflora	Prairie Zinnia	Perennial	Nectar



Design Guidelines

1. Provide a variety of plants that feed larval and adult butterflies. Food plants need to provide for two different stages of the butterfly's life: larval and adult. Therefore it is important to have an adequate mix of plants that will support caterpillars, and other plants that will be available for the adults. If possible, try to select flowering plants that will have overlapping seasons; if selected correctly you can have nectar sources almost year-round.
2. Emphasize massing of plants. Massing should be relatively greater in butterfly gardens compared to bird gardens. This is due to the greater recognition factor of plant masses than singular plants by adult butterflies. Use of accent plants (uniquely shapes such as Agaves and Yuccas) with the massed plantings can create effective contrast and interest for the garden visitor.
3. Provide sunny, wind-protected locations. Butterflies are cold-blooded and need sunlight to warm the muscles they use to fly, and protection from wind while feeding.
4. Provide a puddle. Butterflies require a shallow puddle or moist soil for water. A slow dripping emitter near a water-loving plant can fulfil this need.
5. Locate plantings in a safe area. Be sure to locate plants for butterflies away from busy streets where passing cars might do more harm than good. Locate plantings at least 5 feet away from traffic so that the butterflies have plenty of room to make a safe trip to your flowers.



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