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BUTTERFLY GARDENING BASICS

As meadows, hedgerows and open fields with their native plants give way to land development, butterflies rely increasingly on our gardens to provide a friendly habitat. They require plants during each stage of their life cycle – egg, caterpillar, chrysalis (or pupa) and butterfly. Supporting and maintaining a population of butterflies from spring to early fall requires a garden with plants for all stages of life. Attracting butterflies to your garden is easy to do.

WHAT DO BUTTERFLIES NEED?

- host plants where females lay their eggs and caterpillars will feed
- flowers that are a good source of nectar for the butterflies found in your area
- water, damp spots or puddles, where butterflies get necessary nutrients and moisture
- shelter, supplied by shrubs that provide a wind break, trees that provide nighttime roosts and protection from weather, or grasses on which caterpillars form their chrysalis
- an insecticide-free environment, since using these chemicals kills desirable insects as well as harmful pests
- sun, so that your plants will flourish and butterflies will have a longer period of warmth for flying and feeding. Since butterflies only fly well when their body temperature is over 85 degrees, large flat rocks for “basking” and warming themselves will add to the appeal of your garden.

A sunny display of colorful flowers is a good beginning. To attract a wide assortment of butterflies you need to provide a variety of flowers of diverse heights and different seasons of bloom. Planting each variety in clusters rather than individually makes them easier to locate. Including a mixture of annuals and perennials allows you to discover which varieties are most successful in your area. On the back of this sheet is a suggested list of host and nectar plants to get you started.

Nectar Plants

PERENNIALS

<i>Achillea</i> – Yarrow	S-F
<i>Agastache</i> – Anise Hyssop	Sp-S
<i>Anaphalis</i> – Pearly Everlasting	S-F
<i>Aster</i> – Aster	LtS-F
<i>Asclepias</i> – Butterfly Weed	S-F
<i>Chelone</i> – Turtlehead	LtS-F
<i>Coreopsis</i> – Tickseed	S-F
<i>Dianthus</i> – Sweet William	Sp-F
<i>Echinacea</i> – Coneflower	S-F
<i>Echinops</i> – Globe Thistle	LtS-F
<i>Eupatorium</i> – Joe Pye Weed	LtS-F
<i>Gaillardia</i> – Blanketflower	S-F
<i>Helenium</i> – Sneezeweed	LtS-F
<i>Hesperis</i> – Dame's Rocket	Sp
<i>Lavandula</i> – Lavender	S-F
<i>Liatris</i> – Gay Feather	LtS-F
<i>Lychnis</i> – Maltese Cross	S-F
<i>Monarda</i> – Bee Balm	S-F
<i>Penstemon</i> – Beard Tongue	LtS-F
<i>Phlox</i> – Phlox	S
<i>Pycnanthemum</i> – Mountain Mint	S-F
<i>Salvia</i> – Sage	S-F
<i>Scabiosa</i> – Pincushion Flower	LtS-F
<i>Sedum</i> – Sedum	LtS-F
<i>Solidago</i> – Goldenrod	LtS-F
<i>Verbena</i> – Verbena	S-F
<i>Veronica</i> – Speedwell	S-F

ANNUALS

<i>Cleome</i> – Spiderflower	S-F
<i>Cosmos</i> – Cosmos	S-F
<i>Gaillardia</i> – Blanketflower	S-F
<i>Gomphrena</i> – Globe Amaranth	S-F
<i>Helianthus</i> – Sunflower	S-F
<i>Heliotropium</i> – Heliotrope	S-F
<i>Lantana</i> – Lantana	S-F
<i>Salvia</i> – Sage	S-F
<i>Tagetes</i> – French Marigold	S-F
<i>Tithonia</i> – Mexican Sunflower	S-F
<i>Verbena</i> – Verbena	S-F
<i>Zinnia</i> – Zinnia	S-F

SHRUBS

<i>Abelia</i> – Glossy Abelia	LtS-F
<i>Buddleia</i> – Butterfly Bush	S-F
<i>Caryopteris</i> – Blue Mist Spirea	LtS-F
<i>Ceanothus</i> – New Jersey Tea	S-F
<i>Clethra</i> – Sweet Pepperbush	LtS-F
<i>Lindera</i> – Spicebush	Sp

KEY – BLOOM SEASON

Spring	Sp
Summer	S
Late Summer	LtS
Fall	F

HOST PLANTS – Some caterpillars may feed on herbs or vegetables you have planted in your garden. If you grow fennel, parsley, dill, cabbage, broccoli or beans, plant extras to share with the caterpillars. Many feed on native vegetation, such as violets, Queen Anne's lace, milkweed or red and white clover. Leaving wildflowers, grasses and weeds on part of your property can provide additional food sources and shelter.

BUTTERFLIES YOU MIGHT SEE – 12 of the most common butterflies in Mercer County are:

Black Swallowtail	Buckeye	Red Admiral
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	Pearl Crescent	Cabbage White
Spicebush Swallowtail	Great Spangled Fritillary	Clouded Sulphur
Silver Spotted Skipper	Painted Lady	American Lady

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE? TRY THESE:

Plye, Robert M. *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Butterflies*

Schneck, Marcus. *Creating a Butterfly Garden: A Guide to Attracting and Identifying Butterfly Visitors*

Stokes, Donald et al. *Stokes Butterfly book: The Complete Guide to Butterfly Gardening, Identification, and Behavior*

For more information call Rutgers Cooperative Extension at (609) 989-6830.