

**Texas Butterfly Garden**  
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Butterflies add beauty, color and interest to a garden. To attract butterflies provide the right environment and the right plants. Feeding on flower nectar gives butterflies energy to fly and produce eggs. Butterflies prefer flat heads or narrow spikes of numerous tiny flowers, which offers a landing place to hold on while feeding. Flowers of the daisy family are their favorites, and butterflies are attracted to bright, colorful flowers. Some butterflies are attracted to puddles and pond edges and fermenting sap seeping from wounds on tree trunks.

Design a garden for butterflies by planting large stands of individual flowers rather than single flowers planted here and there. Locate the garden in full sun and protect it from strong winds with a fence or windbreak.

Butterflies often congregate around a water source. Fill a shallow container with gravel or sand and sink it in a sunny spot in the garden. Keep the container flooded with water. Butterflies are cold-blooded and cannot regulate their body temperature. They bask in the sun to warm up enough to fly. Provide flat rocks for sunning. Butterflies hide in the foliage of plants to cool off on hot days and to rest on cloudy and rainy days.

The butterfly's mission is to mate and lay eggs, which hatch in a few days into tiny larvae, and then mature into caterpillars. The caterpillars live for several weeks growing larger and eating the foliage of flowers of a host plant. When the caterpillar stops feeding it goes through a metamorphosis, forming a saclike chrysalis with a pupa inside. The pupa transforms itself from a caterpillar into a winged butterfly to continue the life cycle. The female butterfly lives about two weeks and lays eggs on the underside

of a host plant, usually choosing a different type of plant than it feeds on for nectar. To keep the most butterflies in you garden supply a food source for the caterpillars. Do not use chemical sprays in the butterfly garden. The chemicals not only kill, but also discourage butterflies from visiting because of their harsh odors.

Flowers that are excellent nectar sources for butterflies include lantana, verbena, zinnia, butterfly plant, purple coneflower, sage, marigold, mist flowers, sweet alyssum, Shasta daisy, Pentas, shrimp plant, gloriosa daisy, candytuft, summer phlox, purple heart, iris, daylily, sedum, foxglove, yarrow and viburnum.

Favorite host plants for butterflies are butterfly weed or milkweed, parsley, dill, fennel, yarrow, passion vine or maypop, and cannas.

The addition of a bait station can enhance a butterfly garden. Bait stations use fermented or sweet liquids made from bananas or other cut fruit, brown sugar, beer or yeast. Painted on tree trunks or place in dished bait attracts some species.

For more information contact the Angelina County Extension office at 634-6414 or visit the Aggie Horticulture website at

<http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/tamuhort.html>.