

## Butterflies: Nature's Jewels

Butterflies are like flying flowers and their beauty makes us forget that they are insects. The first stage of their life is an egg, then a caterpillar that eats lots of non-flowering plant matter, then a pupa, and finally the butterfly that feeds on flower nectar. Most butterflies live only 1-3 weeks.

Most common and easily identifiable Dallas butterflies

- Gulf Fritillary
- Black Swallowtail
- Tiger Swallowtail
- Monarch
- Queen
- Red Admiral
- Sulphur
- Skippers
- Hairstreaks

Requirements for butterfly gardening

No insecticides

A sunny open space

Nectar producing flowers

Masses of the same plants

Red, orange, pink, purple, and yellow flowers

Even better

Continuous blooms

Wind protection

Host plants for caterpillars

Puddle area

Gardens can range from a few containers to small beds to whole yards. For maximum enjoyment plant the garden where you will see it during the daytime when butterflies are most active.

## TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

10056 Marsh Lane, Ste B-101  
Dallas, TX 75229-0071  
<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>



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Dallas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers supporting Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - Dallas County Horticulture programming. [www.dallascountymastergardeners.org](http://www.dallascountymastergardeners.org)

Document originally created by Janet D. Smith  
Certified Dallas County Master Gardener

## TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

# Butterfly Gardening



**Dallas County  
Master Gardener**

# Best Gardening Practices

**Planning and Design:** Consider function, location, size, appearance, amount of sunlight, water requirements, budget and maintenance.

**Bed Preparation:** Remove existing plants, incorporate 3" of compost into the top 8" of soil and mound the bed higher in the center to allow for drainage. Adding 3" of expanded shale will improve the soil even more.

**Soil Analysis:** Take soil samples in several locations and send them to a reliable lab for testing. Use the results to determine the best fertilizer for your garden. This will probably be nitrogen.

**Appropriate Plant Selection:** Choose native and adapted plants because they thrive in our climate and soil without excessive watering, fertilization and pesticides. Pay careful attention to the mature size of the plant and follow the suggested spacing. Use a variety of plants that suit the location and function of your garden and that suit each other. Mix perennials and annuals to create blooms in each season. Perennials come back each year but usually have a short blooming season; choose ones with a Plant Hardiness Zone of 8 or less. Annuals are planted each year but bloom for longer periods.

**Efficient Irrigation:** Grouping your plants by their water needs makes the garden much easier to maintain. Ground level watering like soaker hoses, drip irrigation, and hand-watering, are most efficient and economical.

New plants will need regular irrigation for the first two growing seasons, then the water can be reduced. Water deeply once a week in the absence of rain. This encourages good root systems and increases the plants' resistance to pests and diseases.

**Mulch your garden:** Applying at least 3" of mulch each year will help the soil to retain moisture, moderate the temperature of the soil in winter and summer, and help prevent weeds. As the mulch breaks down, it provides organic material to enrich the soil. Avoid piling mulch directly on to plant stems.

**Appropriate Maintenance:** If you follow these recommendations, there will be little or no need for pesticides. If you must use one, read the label to make sure it is the correct product for your problem and follow the directions as written. Remove weeds as you see them.

These are the principles of Earth-Kind® gardening, a program developed by Texas AgriLife Extension, Texas A&M System. The objective of Earth-Kind® is to combine the best of organic and traditional gardening and landscaping principles to create a new horticultural system for the 21st Century, a research-proven system based on real-world effectiveness and environmental responsibility. It provides maximum gardening and landscape enjoyment while preserving and protecting our fragile environment. Putting Earth-Kind® techniques into everyday practice will help your family, your community and your environment. To find out more about Earth-Kind®, go to

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind>

# Butterfly Plants

## Perennial Nectar Plants

Aster	Gregg's Mistflower
Autumn Sage	Lantana
Black-eyed Susan	Penstemon
Brazilian Verbena	Pincushion Flower
Butterfly Bush	Sedum
Columbine	Shasta Daisy
Coneflower	Turks' Cap
Gayfeather	Verbena

## Annual Nectar Plants

Cosmos	Mexican Sunflower
Globe Amaranth	Pentas
Marigold	Senna

## Caterpillar Host Plants

Dill	Fennel
Parsley	Passion Flower
Milkweed	Pipe Vine
Candle Tree	Hollyhock

## Both Host and Nectar

Butterfly Weed	Pineapple Sage
Flame Acanthus	Frogfruit
Violet	Hibiscus
Mexican Plum Tree	

## Non-Butterfly Plants

Rose	Begonia
Camellia	Poppy
St John's Wort	Common Sunflower
Petunias	Celosia