



CREATING A BUTTERFLY HOUSE & GARDEN (Pg 1)



Creating your Butterfly Garden -

Native & local larval foodplants - (shrubs, trees, vines & groundcovers)

Choose native butterfly larval foodplants local to your area, (your local Landcare group will help with this).

Your flower beds - Should provide colour as an attractant, & nectar as a food source for adult Butterflies using a mixture of exotic & native flower plants –

Many exotic flower garden plants are a nectar source for adults, though make sure they do not have pest potential. These exotics will provide a necessary supplement to your chosen native flower garden species, few of which provide the extended flowering periods given by exotics.

Butterfly Gardening For Urban Dwellers

Urban dwellers may not be fortunate enough to have areas of native bushland, but any urban block however small has the potential to attract butterflies, and assist in their conservation.

Guidelines

The same guidelines apply as for rural dwellers, the planting of native local species, (suitable for an urban situation), as larval food, the retention of an untended, “wild” area, and in the flower beds, a mix of native & exotic nectar producing plants for adult butterflies, (as mentioned above, exotics that do not have pest potential), and the purchase of a butterfly identification book.

Insecticides/herbicides

Wherever possible, exclude the use of insecticides and herbicides.

Leave some areas untended

In creating a habitat for the purpose of attracting and encouraging breeding populations of Lepidoptera, it must be remembered that what may be pleasing and attractive to us, may not be so to a butterfly or moth, that prefer “wild” untended areas.

“Weeds”

Plants that we consider weeds such as Stinging Nettles, (for the Australian Admiral, (*Vanessa itea*)), Sidaretusia, (for the Common Eggfly, (*Hypolimnas bolina nerina*)), Cotton Bush, (for the Wanderer, (*Danaus plexippus plexippus*)), native grasses (for Skippers), and legumes such as Twining Glycine, (for the Common Grass Blue, (*Zizina labradus labradus*)), are actually butterfly larval foodplants.

A small proportion of your garden

Your entire garden or property need not be overgrown, as a small proportion in relation to the size of your property would be sufficient for this purpose, and there are many attractive flowering native plants and shrubs.

Larval & adult food

In creating your butterfly garden, in addition to larval foodplants, you will need to grow nectar producing varieties such as Callistemons, Buddleia, Pentis and Ixora to provide food for the adult butterflies. If present with a larval food source, adults will be tempted to stay.

Fruit bearing trees

The foliage, flowers and fruits of many fruit bearing trees we cultivate are a larval food source as well for Lepidoptera. (To Pg 2)

Some varieties

Some of these are Custard Apple, (for the Pale Green Triangle (*Graphium sarpedon choredon*)), Litchi and Macadamia (for Lycaenidae varieties), and of course Citrus, native and exotic, for the Orchard Butterfly, (*Papilio aegeus aegeus*), and Dingy Swallowtail, (*Papilio anactus*) among others of this group.

Attractant/diversity

Adults of numerous species are attracted to decaying fruit, these in turn attracting other insects that provide food for frogs, so adding diversity to your garden.

Planning your Butterfly Garden -

When planning your butterfly garden, the greatest benefit for your local Lepidoptera population can be achieved by planting out your property in plots representing as many habitats as possible, depending of course on available space, the region where your property may be situated, and whether it will support those habitat types.

Best catered for

In this way, the needs for those species that inhabit rainforest, open forest, wetlands or heathland may be best catered for.

Disperse plantings

Numbers of each of these plantings should be dispersed throughout your property, for butterflies fly randomly when searching for foodplants, and in this way, a greater chance exists for their finding suitable requirements for breeding purposes in your garden.

Open space

Areas of sunny, open space should be provided between plots where native grasses may be established.



Soaks

Many butterflies congregate at natural soaks or wet areas to ingest with their proboscis concentrations of salts and minerals, present due to the evaporation of water. These are necessary for their bodily functions, and in recreating a natural situation for these insects; it would be to their advantage to recreate one or more of these if possible.

Pathways

Pathways between gardens should be east-west, and 1.5 to 2m wide if possible, allowing areas of sunlight between shaded areas where butterflies can sun themselves, and use as flyways through the heavier vegetation as in a natural situation.

Creating your Butterfly House -

Your butterfly house need be no more than a converted shade house, or the minimum recommended size of a purposely built structure 8m by 3m high. Ideally, it should be circular with no corners where butterflies could get trapped, panic, and damage themselves.

Double doors

It is best to have double doors to limit the possibility of Butterflies escaping, and more importantly, to limit the possibility of entrance by parasitic Flies and Wasps.

Shade

Shade should be split between 50% and 30% to cater for the habitat requirements of a broad range of Butterflies, (eg - Heavy Forest/Open Forest/Plains types).

Humidity

It is important to retain humidity within your structure, and for this it is best to install misters set to operate three times a day for three to four minutes (depending on season). A layer of gravel on the floor of the house will assist in this, as will an ornamental pond, fountain and waterfall set among vegetation.

Pots/rotation/drippers

Plants in the House are best potted to allow for rotation, with at least three of the same type, ones overeaten to be rested outside, and replaced with fresh plants of the same species bought in as replacements. These may be watered by an automatic dripper system.

Mimic habitats

Try to mimic the habitat requirements of a range of butterflies when placing these, with heavier "plantings" around the pond, fountain and waterfall for "rainforest", to thinner "plantings" for "open forest" & "plains".

Windbreak

Suitable vegetation should be planted as a windbreak on the outside exposed edge of your house, and similar potted vegetation placed on its' inside edge as wind protection for your butterflies.

Eggs and caterpillars

Eggs and caterpillars can be removed from their food plants on leaves, and placed on the appropriate food plant in the enclosure, attached by their leaves with staples or paper clips. It is best not to handle eggs or caterpillars.

Breeding population

If sufficient appropriate larval and adult foodplants are maintained in your butterfly house, then a breeding population of butterflies will develop. Excess adults may be released in the garden.

Nectar food source

It is important to have a nectar food source for the adult butterflies of the house. This can be achieved by placing potted Pentis, Buddleia, and Callistemons inside, along with feeders containing a nectar mix of 5gms of Sucrose, 5gms of Glucose and 5gms of Fructose to 100mls of Water, changed daily if possible.

Feeder

As butterflies cannot drink from a pool of liquid, this should be placed in a shallow container with coloured beads secured on its' base by aquarium grade silicone, and arranged to resemble a flower. It can be mounted either on a bracket from the side of the house, or on a stand. The liquid should only cover half the thickness of the beads.

Protection from mist/rain

The dispenser will need to be covered for protection from mist or rain, or set in a position where it is protected from this. (To Pg4)

Ants

If ants are found to be a problem, the arms of the bracket or the stand support can be smeared with petroleum jelly, or a similar non-injurious substance to butterflies.

Insecticides

Do not of course use insecticides in the house.

Additional methods

An additional method to dispense nectar is to spray it on to a red cloth hanging in the house, being aware not to have it dripping so to attract ants, or to spray it onto flower heads of the nectar plants, being again aware of possible ant presence.

