

Attracting butterflies to your garden

Image: Mike Jeffries

How to attract butterflies to your garden ...

Butterflies and moths have suffered habitat loss particularly through the removal of native grasslands. These creatures not only add colour and beauty to your garden, they are important pollinators for many plants. Butterflies require nectar-producing plants for their food source and host food plants for their caterpillars.

Butterflies, active during the day, particularly like daisy-type flowers, which provide a landing platform for them whilst feeding. Moths, active during the evening, are attracted to cream and white flowers, which are visible at dusk and often fragrant.

The plants that butterflies and moths feed on at the larval (caterpillar) stage of their life cycle are not permanently damaged and plants often benefit from the tip pruning of these creatures.

Butterflies are not attracted to gardens where plants are continually pruned and sprayed, as these practices kill caterpillars and remove the eggs that the butterflies have laid on the foliage.

Butterfly attracting gardens are relaxed gardens that require minimal maintenance. It is very important if you wish to attract butterflies to your garden, that you try to reduce any chemical sprays to a minimum, or do not spray at all.

Butterflies tend to lay their eggs on plants with smooth foliage. You will sometimes see the eggs suspended on the end of a thread off the leaf surface, and sometimes laid in neat rows on the leaf surface.

Butterfly attracting gardens will provide both food sources and host plants. It is also a good idea to provide a fresh source of water, however this does not have to be large.

A mixture of plants including native grasses, daisies and plants with small tubular flowers usually in pale colours will attract butterflies. Also leave an area of cleared mulched ground, with some rocks to provide a sunny resting spot during the day.

Plants that attract butterflies ...

The following is a tiny selection of Australian native plants that may be used to attract butterflies to your garden, and the reason why butterflies are attracted to them.

Shrubs

<i>Bursaria spinosa</i>	Food source and egg laying
<i>Clematis microphylla</i>	Food source
<i>Spyridium</i> spp	Food source
<i>Goodenia ovata</i>	Food source and shelter
<i>Calytrix tetragona</i>	Food source and shelter
<i>Pimelea</i> spp	Food source

Grasses

<i>Poa</i> spp	Food source and shelter
<i>Themeda triandra</i>	Food source and shelter
<i>Austrodanthonia</i> spp	Food source and shelter
<i>Lomandra</i> spp	Egg laying
<i>Stylidium graminifolium</i>	Food source
<i>Xanthorrhoea</i> spp	Food source and resting spot

Groundcovers

<i>Brachyscome</i> spp	Food source and resting spot
<i>Goodenia ovata</i>	Food source and shelter
<i>Cryocephalum</i> spp	Food source and shelter

Lilies

<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>	Food source
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