

Top Plants for Your Butterfly Garden

Create a best-on-the-block butterfly garden with these must-have plants.



Butterfly Weed

Grow a butterfly weed or two and you're sure to have Monarchs. The adults drink nectar from the plant's summertime orange flowers, and the caterpillars eat the plant's leaves.

Here's a hint: Add variety to your [garden](#) with other milkweeds, such as annual bloodflower or tall swamp milkweed.

Name: *Asclepias tuberosa*

Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained [soil](#)

Size: To 3 feet tall and 1 foot wide

Zones: 4-9

Grow it with: Liatris, another long-blooming [perennial](#) that Monarch butterflies love to visit.

[Click here for more on growing butterfly weed.](#)



Aster

A top plant for the fall garden, aster is a heavy bloomer with colorful [flowers](#) in shades of blue, purple, pink, red, and white. Aster does double duty: The blossoms supply nectar for fall butterflies, and Pearl Crescent caterpillars feed on the plant's leaves.

Here's a hint: Look for newer named varieties of asters; they're often more disease resistant and compact.

Name: *Aster* selections

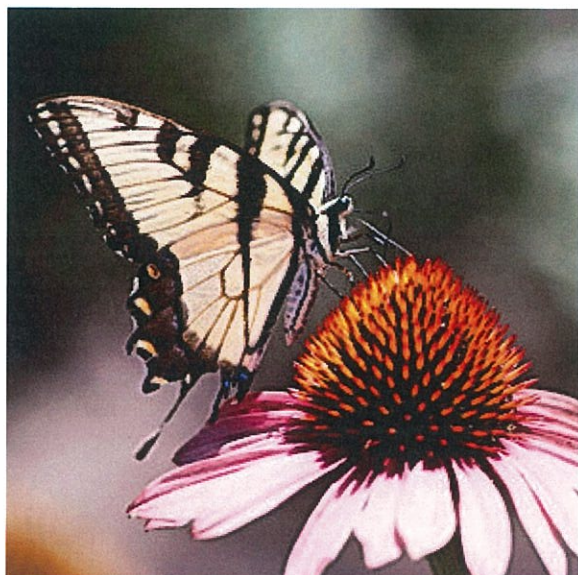
Growing Conditions: Full sun and moist, well-drained soil

Size: To 5 feet tall and 2 feet wide, depending on type

Zones: 3-8, depending on type

Grow it with: Bloody geranium -- this spring- and summer-blooming [perennial](#) develops bright red fall [foliage](#) that looks great with colorful aster flowers.

[Click here for more on growing aster.](#)



Purple Coneflower

There are lots of reasons to grow purple [coneflower](#) if you have a sunny spot. A wide range of butterflies love sipping its nectar; the plant is very heat and drought tolerant, it's a perfect cut flower, and it blooms almost all summer long.

Name: *Echinacea* selections

Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained [soil](#)

Size: To 5 feet tall and 2 feet wide, depending on type

Zones: 3-9

Grow it with: Anise hyssop for a combo that will give you pretty bouquets and tons of butterflies for weeks in summer.

[Click here to learn about some of the best coneflower varieties for your garden](#)

[Click here for more on growing purple coneflower](#)



Salvia

There's a [salvia](#) for every garden: some are tall, others are short. Some have blue or purple blooms, and others have red, orange, or pink flowers. While you might have trouble picking a salvia, the butterflies won't -- they'll reliably flock to it every summer. 'May Night' is shown here.

Name: *Salvia* 'May Night'

Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained soil

Size: To 3 feet tall and 1 foot wide

Zones: 4-9

Grow it with: [Coreopsis](#) for a long-blooming, no-fail blue-and-yellow combination.

[Click here for more on growing salvia](#)



Lantana

Colorful lantana blooms all summer long in glowing shades of lavender, pink, red, orange, yellow, cream, and white. The versatile plant looks perfect in containers or beds and borders. The butterflies will agree -- lantana is a perfect addition to your [garden](#).

Name: *Lantana* selections

Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained [soil](#)

Size: To 3 feet tall and wide

Zones: 10, but in cooler areas, lantana is grown as an annual.

Grow it with: Zinnia; the two look beautiful together and will lure an endless stream of butterflies to your garden.

[Click here for container-garden ideas that butterflies can't resist](#)
[Learn more about growing lantana.](#)



Pentas

An all-around [garden](#) champion, pentas bears clusters of star-shaped blooms in bright shades of pink, red, and white. It loves hot conditions, holds up to drought pretty well, and is a sure bet for attracting butterflies and hummingbirds in need of a snack.

Name: *Pentas* selections

Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained [soil](#)

Size: To 4 feet tall and 3 feet wide

Zones: 10-11, but usually grown as an annual

Grow it with: Angelonia for an easy-growing combo that looks smashing all season.

[Learn more about pentas.](#)



Passionflower

Hardy passionflower is one of the most exotic vines you can grow. It's also one of the best for butterflies as a variety of them drink its nectar. It's a host plant for several types of butterflies, as well.

Name: *Passiflora incarnata*

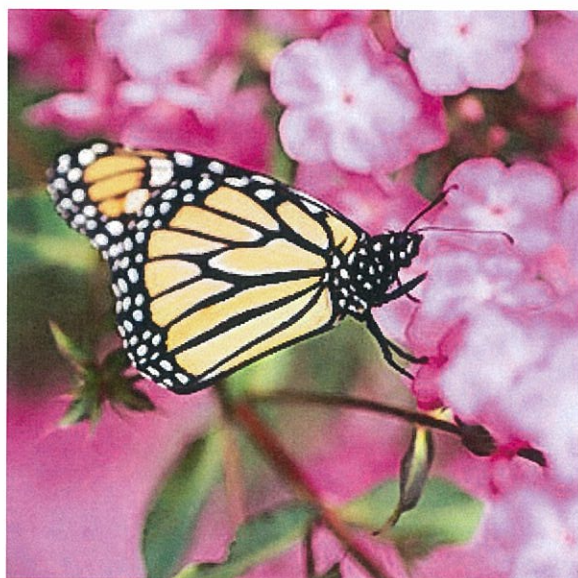
Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained [soil](#)

Size: Climbs to 10 feet

Zones: 6-9

Grow it with: Black-eyed Susan vine for a charming blue-and-yellow combo of quick-growing vines.

[Learn more about growing passionflowers.](#)



Phlox

[Phlox](#) bears beautiful clusters of red, pink, lavender, salmon, or white blooms throughout the summer. Their lovely scent delights our noses as much as their nectar delights hungry butterflies.

Here's a hint: Phlox can be troubled by a disease called powdery mildew. Look for disease-resistant varieties.

Name: *Phlox paniculata*

Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained [soil](#)

Size: To 4 feet tall and 1 foot wide

Zones: 4-8

Grow it with: Purple [coneflower](#) -- the two plants thrive in the same growing conditions and visually complement each other.

[Learn more about growing phlox.](#)



Mexican Sunflower

This plant is big and bold -- and perfect for butterflies. Enjoy this easy-care annual's nonstop display of big orange [flowers](#) all summer long.

Name: *Tithonia rotundifolia*

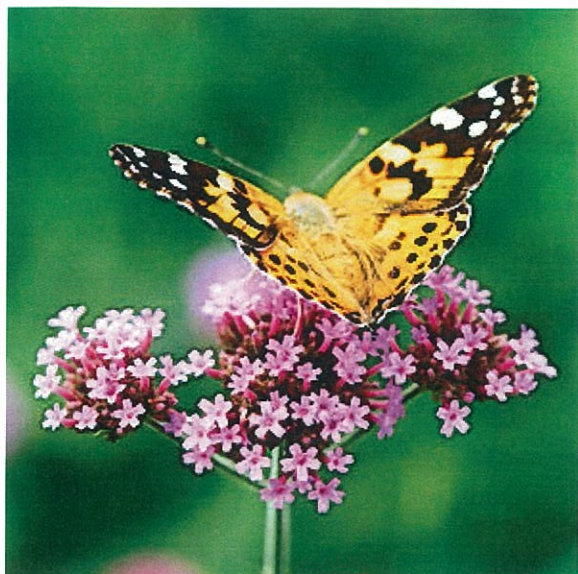
Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained [soil](#)

Size: To 6 feet tall and 1 foot wide

Zones: Annual

Grow it with: South American verbena; the plants look amazing together and like the same growing conditions.

[Click here for more on growing Mexican sunflower](#)



South American Verbena

This plant is a perfect cut flower -- but don't worry about using it in bouquets. The more you cut, the more it blooms, so there will always be a supply of the lavender-purple blooms for butterflies to enjoy, too.

Name: *Verbena bonariensis*

Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained [soil](#)

Size: To 6 feet tall and 2 feet wide

Zones: 7-10, but in colder Zones it's usually grown as an annual.

Grow it with: Yarrow, which has flat clusters of blooms in a rainbow of shades. Like South American [verbena](#), it's heat and drought resistant, so it's a cinch to grow.

[Learn more about growing verbena.](#)



Zinnia

Just about everyone loves [zinnia](#), which is why it's a favorite of butterfly gardeners, cottage gardeners, and beginning gardeners. It blooms in an almost endless range of colors and looks great all summer long.

Name: *Zinnia* selections

Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained [soil](#)

Size: To 3 feet tall and 1 foot wide

Zones: Annual

Grow it with: Fennel, which has a ferny texture that looks perfect against the bold zinnia blooms.

[Click here for more on growing zinnias](#)



Joe Pye Weed

Create towers of [flowers](#) with big Joe Pye weed, which can grow more than 6 feet tall. If you don't have that much room, don't worry -- types such as 'Little Joe' stay smaller. Either way, both you and the butterflies will love the big clusters of dusty-pink flowers that appear from midsummer to fall.

Name: *Eupatorium* selections

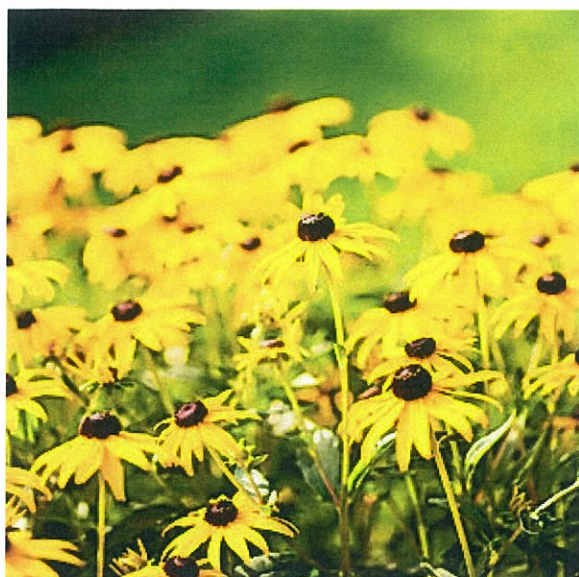
Growing Conditions: Full sun and moist, well-drained [soil](#)

Size: To 7 feet tall and 3 feet wide, depending on type

Zones: 3-9

Grow it with: South American [verbena](#) for an easy-care combination no butterfly can resist.

[Click here for more on growing Joe Pye Weed](#)



Black-Eyed Susan

Black-eyed Susan is just as perfect for bouquets as it is for butterflies. This tough [perennial](#) blooms in late summer with big, yellow, daisy-shaped [flowers](#).

Name: *Rudbeckia* selections

Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained soil

Size: To 6 feet tall and 3 feet wide, depending on type

Zones: 4-9

Grow it with: Purple [coneflower](#) for a classic prairie-style combination.

[Click here for more on growing Black-Eyed Susan](#)



Fennel

Bronze fennel is a great plant for adding texture to the [garden](#). It's also a surefire way to attract Swallowtail butterflies, whose caterpillars munch on the fennel's ferny [foliage](#).

Here's a hint: Fennel can self-seed aggressively in the garden; keep it under control by cutting off most of the [flowers](#) as they fade. Leave a few flowers to produce seed to keep the plant coming back in your yard.

Name: *Foeniculum vulgare*

Growing Conditions: Full sun and moist, well-drained soil

Size: To 6 feet tall and 2 feet wide

Zones: 4-9

Grow it with: Queen Anne's lace, which offers a similar texture but with green foliage and white flowers. Swallowtail caterpillars also feed on this plant.

[Learn more about growing fennel.](#)



Anise Hyssop

There are lots of reasons to grow anise hyssop: It's super heat and drought tolerant, deer and rabbits leave it alone, it blooms for weeks in late summer, and butterflies love it. Plus it's a great cut flower.

Name: *Agastache foeniculum*

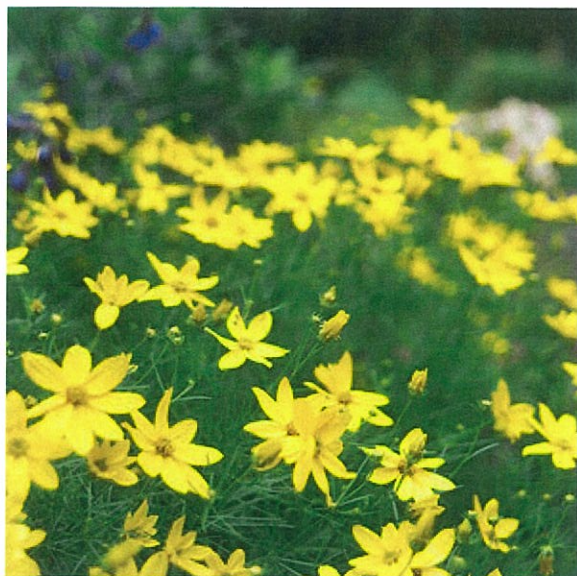
Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained [soil](#)

Size: To 5 feet tall and 2 feet wide

Zones: 4-10

Grow it with: Black-eyed Susan for a dazzling blue-and-yellow combo of easy-care plants.

[Learn more about growing anise hyssop.](#)



Coreopsis

This award-winning perennial will reward you -- and the butterflies -- with little yellow flowers over rich green, ferny [foliage](#) for much of the summer.

Here's a hint: Shear the plant back with hedge clippers after a flush of blooms start to fade; it'll spring back and bloom again.

Name: *Coreopsis* 'Moonbeam'

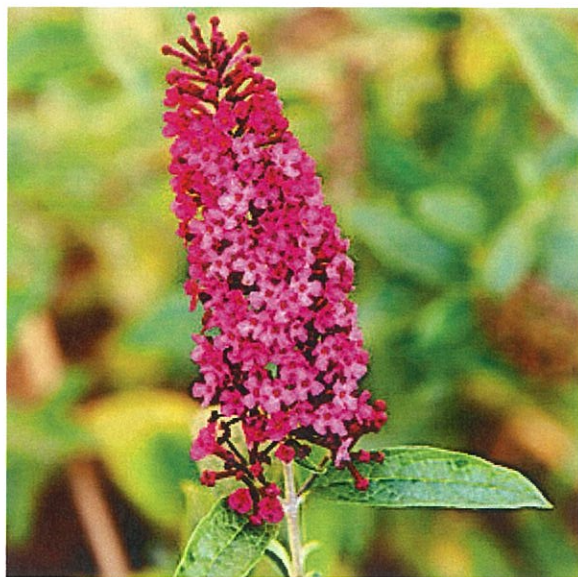
Growing Conditions: Full sun and well-drained soil

Size: To 18 inches tall and wide

Zones: 3-8

Grow it with: [Sedum](#), which picks up blooming once the [coreopsis](#) starts to fade for the summer.

[Click here for more on growing coreopsis](#)



Butterfly Bush

This shrub is called butterfly bush for a reason -- you're sure to see it covered in butterflies all summer long. An easy-care shrub, it features fragrant [flowers](#) in shades of blue, purple, and white.

Here's a hint: If your butterfly bush starts to get big, prune it back in winter or [early spring](#). You can cut it almost all the way down to the ground.

Name: *Buddleia* selections

Growing Conditions: Full sun and moist, well-drained soil

Size: To 10 feet tall and 15 feet wide, depending on type

Zones: 5-9, depending on type

Grow it with: Mexican sunflower; this annual's bold orange flowers look great against just about any butterfly bush.

[Click here for more on growing butterfly bush.](#)



www.bhg.com © Copyright 2012, Meredith Corporation. All Rights Reserved.